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OLD NORSE STORIES

BY

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OLD NORSE STORIES.

W. P. I

WHAT THESE STORIES ARE

Many years ago our forefathers, who lived far away in the Northland, thought that everything in the world was controlled by some god or goddess, who had special care of that thing. When spring came they said, "Iduna is waking." In early summer, when grass covered the hill-sides and grain waved in the valleys, they said, "Sif is preparing a plentiful harvest." When thunder clouds rolled across the sky and lightning flashed, they said, "Thor is driving his chariot and throwing his hammer."

They were glad when the long, light days of summer came, and said, "We love Balder the beautiful, Balder the good."

But they shrank from the scorching heat of later summer, and said, "We fear the pranks of Loki, the mischief maker."

They saw the rainbow, and called it the bridge leading up to the home of the gods.

They loved the gods who were kind to them; and they dreaded the frost giants and storm giants, who were the enemies of gods and men.

They prayed to Odin, the All-father, for wisdom and

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protection, because they did not know the name of the one great God.

When they gathered around the fireside in long winter evenings, they told tales of giants, dwarfs, and elves; and talked of Sigurd, the prince of the sunlight, who killed the dragon of cold and darkness and waked the dawn maiden.

They thought much of the wonderful beings who lived, as they supposed, above the clouds or under the earth, and told many strange and beautiful stories about them.

The author of this little book has endeavored in the following pages to retell some of the most popular of these stories in such a way as to make them attractive to young readers. Most of them show what our ancestors thought of the common phenomena of nature, — day and night, summer and winter, storms and sunshine, life and death. They also give us some idea of the strange, rude manners of a semi-barbarous people, and of their ways of living both in times of peace and in times of war.

For the originals of these stories we must go back to the Norse Eddas, written many hundreds of years ago. The author has drawn much of her material from Anderson's "Norse Mythology" and Guerber's "Myths of Northern Lands." The stories of the Volsungs follow the poetical version of William Morris in the story of "Sigurd the Volsung," and the translation by Morris and Magnusson of the ancient "Sigurd Saga." The poetical quotations are from Morris's "Sigurd the Volsung."

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NORSE STORIES

IDUNA

I. IDUNA'S GARDEN

IDUNA was the fair goddess of spring. She lived with her husband, Bragi, in Asgard, in a beautiful garden of fruits and flowers. She tended the flowers, while he wrote verses about them and about the gods and heroes.

Every morning Iduna gathered the golden apples of youth for the breakfast of the gods. Every day the gods and goddesses sat in the cool shade of Iduna's garden. If they were sick or tired, eating one of her apples always brought back health and strength.

II. LOKI'S SUPPER

Odin the All-father, his brother Hœnir, and Loki the mischief maker, were taking a journey round the world. They wanted to see how men were getting on. One evening, when it was too late to go farther, they came to a densely wooded mountain.

There was no house in sight, and they were tired and hungry. There was nothing to eat.

Down in the valley Loki had seen a herd of cattle grazing. They went back, caught an ox, killed it, and dressed the meat. Loki kindled a fire, and began to cook the supper. When it was time for it to be done, the meat was as raw as when first put over the fire. He made more fire, with the same result. He made another fire, but could not cook the meat.

They heard a noise in the branches over their heads. Looking up, they saw a very large eagle. They also saw that the eagle was fanning the flames with his wings, to put out their fire.

A voice spoke to them. The voice said that if they would give the eagle his supper, their meat would soon be cooked. They at once invited the eagle to eat with them. He flew down, and again fanned the flame with his wings. Now the fire grew brighter, and supper was soon ready.

They sat down together; but the eagle took, for his share, one leg and both shoulders of the ox. Loki was angry at this, for he was very hungry. He took a pole that was lying near, and struck the eagle.

One end of the pole stuck fast in the eagle's feathers, and Loki could not let go the other. The

eagle flew away over the tree tops, drawing Loki through the branches, and up the mountain slopes, bruising him against the rough rocks; then it flew near the ground, dragging him over stumps and stones and through briery thickets.

Loki knew then that the storm giant was hidden under the eagle's plumage.

He begged for mercy, but the eagle flew faster. At last Thiassi (for that was the storm giant's name) said, "I will let you go, if you will bring me Iduna and her golden apples."

Loki promised, and Thiassi set him free.

III. THE BEAUTIFUL APPLES

In sorry plight, Loki, all ragged and torn, came back to his companions. The next day the three travelers went home to Asgard, the city of the gods.

When Loki went to visit Iduna, he found her busy about her household tasks. She was dressed in green, and wore a garland of leaves. Her husband, Bragi, was not at home. Iduna had just gathered the apples for the next meal of the gods.

Loki said to her: "I have found a strange tree just outside the city wall. It bears apples finer than yours. The golden color is deeper, and the red a more delicate blush."

"Yes," said Iduna, "those apples are doubtless more beautiful than mine, but not so good to eat. They will not bring back youth and strength."

"I think you are wrong," said Loki. "They are sweeter to the taste, and they restore youth and strength, as well as yours. When I found them, I was very weary; and when I had eaten one, I felt as well as ever I did."

"I will go," said Iduna. "Would it be better to take my apples with me?"

"I think so," said Loki; "because you can better compare them."

She put her apples into a crystal dish, and went with Loki, outside the wall of Asgard.

Thiassi was waiting in his eagle's plumage. Poor Iduna heard the roar of the storm giant in the tree tops; but it was too late to go back. The great eagle caught her in his talons, and flew away to his wintry home in Thrymheim.

IV. IDUNA'S RETURN

The gods missed Iduna, but supposed she had gone on a visit. Of course Loki said nothing; and the gods did not suspect mischief, until gray hairs began to come in their heads, their color was fading, and their faces were becoming wrinkled.

Then they remembered that Iduna had been last

seen with Loki, the mischief maker. They questioned him, but he would not tell the truth.

At last, Thor, the thunder god, became angry, and threatened to strike him unless he told all he knew about Iduna.

Then he told how he had led her out of Asgard, and how she had been stolen. He promised to bring her back, if Frigga would lend him her falcon dress.

Frigga lent him her falcon dress, and he flew away to Thrymheim. Thiassi was out on the sea, fishing. Iduna was sleeping on a rude couch, in a cold, rough hall. There were tears on her cheeks. She looked sad and lonely, but she still held in her arms her crystal dish of apples.

Loki, as a falcon, flew in at a window, placed Iduna in a magic nutshell, and flew away with her in his claws. Just then Thiassi came home. When he found he had lost Iduna, he changed himself into an eagle and flew after her. The falcon flew fast, but the eagle flew faster. Thiassi was gaining on Loki, when they came in sight of Asgard.

All the gods and goddesses were out looking for Iduna and Loki. When they saw them coming and Thiassi pursuing, they made fires on the city wall. The falcon flew over safely, and gave Iduna back to Bragi and the gods; but the fire caught the

eagle's wings; and, with burning plumage, he fell among them. Thor killed him and threw his eyes up into the heavens, where they still shine as stars.

V. IDUNA'S FALL

A huge ash tree, called Yggdrasil, shaded Odin's hall. This tree supported the whole world. It had three great roots: one in Niflheim, the land of cold and darkness; one in Midgard, the home of men; and one in Asgard, the home of the gods.

The tree was cared for by three norns, Past, Present, and Future. Every day they brought fresh clay for its roots, which they moistened with water from the Urdar Fountain. They also sprinkled the leaves with this life-giving water. Sometimes the water dripped from the leaves upon the earth, and made honey, which the bees gathered. The leaves were always green.

On the topmost bough sat an eagle. Between his eyes was a falcon. The falcon had very keen sight; and, from his lofty perch, he could look out over the dwellings of gods and men, and the land of darkness. He talked about everything he saw. Four deer fed on the branches. From their horns dropped sweet dew, which supplied water for all the rivers of earth. The branches also furnished

pasture for the goat, Heidrun, from whose milk was made mead for the heroes of Valhalla. Down in the darkness of Niflheim, a dragon continually gnawed the root, to kill the tree; because he knew that, when Yggdrasil withered, the reign of the gods would end.

The squirrel, Ratatosk, scampered through the branches, and up and down the trunk. He carried tales from the dragon to the eagle, and from the eagle to the dragon. He liked to keep up continual strife.

The council chamber of the gods was at the root of the tree, near Urdar Fountain. It was their hall of justice. They went to it every day, riding over the rainbow bridge, Bifrost. Thor alone went round another way; for he feared that his iron chariot might injure the bridge.

High up in the branches of this wonderful tree, Iduna built a pretty summer house. One day, while sitting at the door of the house, she fell asleep. Down she tumbled through the branches, past the deer and the goat, startling nimble Ratatosk. Down she fell into cold, dark Niflheim.

White and still she lay at the root of the tree. From his high seat, Odin saw her, and sent Bragi and Heimdal to bring her back. Odin gave them a white wolfskin to protect her from the cold.

They found her still alive, but so hurt by the fall that she could neither speak nor move. They wrapped her in the soft white robe; but they could not bring her back until the following spring. Heimdal returned to Odin with the sad news; but Bragi stayed with his wife all the long winter. His harp was silent, and he could not sing; and there were no bird songs, until Iduna was able to throw off the snowy wolfskin robe, and come back with her husband, to tend the flowers again.

SKADI

The storm giant, Thiassi, had a daughter named Skadi. She wore a silver helmet, a suit of chain armor, a snow-white hunting dress, ermine leggings, and broad snowshoes. She carried a glistening spear, and a bow, and a quiver full of arrows. She liked to hunt, and she knew how to fight.

When she heard of her father's death, she came at once to Asgard. The gods admired her courage and loyalty. They tried to offer her gifts; but she only raised her spear, to hurl it at her father's enemies.

Then Loki bowed before her. He sprang to the right and to the left. He danced gracefully. As he swayed to and fro, a long-haired, long-bearded goat imitated every motion. At last, he knelt at her feet, and the goat did the same. Skadi laughed. Her anger was gone, and she could listen to the gods.

Odin pointed out two bright stars; which, he said, were her father's eyes, placed in the heavens to look upon her forever. As for herself, she might marry a god, and become a goddess. She might

choose her husband; but her eyes must be veiled, so she could see only the feet of the gods.

Skadi looked about in amazement. Her eyes fell on Balder, the god of light, the fairest being in the universe. She thought, "I shall know Balder if I see only the hem of his garment."

So she let them tie the bandage over her eyes. Then she looked down and saw a well-shaped foot. "I choose thee," she said; "thou art Balder."

But it was not Balder. It was Njord, who was tall, slender, handsome, and good.

The wedding feast was spread. All the gods and goddesses brought costly gifts. All their palaces were open to the bride. Life in Asgard was better than anything she had ever known.

After a few weeks, Njord said he must go back to Noatun, because he had the care of all the ships on the sea, and the sailors needed his protection. Skadi went with him; but the cry of the sea gulls, and the beating of the waves upon the beach, wearied her; and she longed for the forests of Thrymheim. Njord went with her to her old home; but the howling wolves and the growling bears kept him awake at night. So they agreed to spend nine days together in Thrymheim, and three days together in Noatun; and in that way they lived happily many years.

FREY

I. FREY'S GIFTS

NJORD and Skadi had two children: a boy named Frey, and a girl named Freya. Frey was the god of sunlight and gentle showers, and Freya was the goddess of beauty.

It was the custom in the Northland to make every child a present when he cut his first tooth. When Frey's first tooth came through, the gods gave him Elfheim, the home of the light elves, or fairies, for a tooth gift. The little god was king of Elfheim, or Fairyland, and lived there with his tiny subjects, whenever he could be spared from Asgard. The little creatures loved their king, and obeyed his lightest wish; and he was much happier there than in his mother's icy palace at Thrymheim.

Little Frey soon became a tall, handsome youth. Then the gods gave him a magic sword, which, as soon as it was drawn from the sheath, won every battle of its own accord. But Frey seldom used it, except to fight the cruel frost giants, who dreaded his glittering sword, because it held the softening power of the sunbeams.

Frey had also a fine horse called Blodughofi. This horse could go through fire and water.

II. FREY IN ODIN'S SEAT

Frey was very busy during the summer months. He looked after the sunshine and the warm showers. Sometimes he helped his father direct the gentle winds. But, when the sunshine went away, Frey's work went away too. The dark northern winter seemed very long to the young god.

One day, when wandering about the city of Asgard, he came to the foot of Odin's lofty throne, Hlidskialf. No one ever ascended this throne, except the All-father and his wife Frigga. But the gods all knew that the whole world could be seen from its summit. Frey wanted to see the whole world. So he began to climb the steps. No one saw him, and he soon came to the top. He sat down on Odin's seat, and looked toward the north. He saw a maiden standing in the doorway of her father's castle. She was the most beautiful maiden in the world. She was Gerda, daughter of Gymir, the frost giant. When she raised her hand to open the door, many-colored lights blazed in the northern sky, and shot out toward the southern heavens. Frey longed to win Gerda for his bride.

Frey and his Steed, Golden-bristle.

But he knew that her father, Gymir, would never consent to their marriage, because Gymir was cousin to Thiassi, the storm giant, whom the gods had killed in Asgard.

Slowly and sadly Frey left Hlidskialf. He walked up and down the city streets as usual; but he was silent, and never joined in the sports of the young gods. At the feasts his cup of sparkling mead was left untasted. No one could find out any reason for his strange conduct. His father, Njord, was greatly alarmed, and sent for his mother, Skadi, who was then at their winter home in Thrymheim.

III. HOW SKADI HELPED HER SON

Skadi came at once. She, too, was greatly concerned about her son. She knew there must be some trouble; but he refused to tell his mother what it was that made him so miserable.

One day Skadi called Skirnir, their most trusted servant. She said: "Skirnir, you played with Frey in childhood; you were his friend in youth; you have served him faithfully in manhood. He trusts you. Find out his secret, and help him in his trouble. You alone can save his life."

Skirnir went to Frey, and learned from him the story of his visit to the lofty throne, how he had

seen Gerda, the most beautiful of maidens, and how he wished to make her his wife. This, Frey said, could never be done, because Gerda was the daughter of Gymir, the frost giant, who hated him. Besides, the giant's castle was surrounded by a barrier of fire, and at the approach of any stranger the flames leaped as high as the sky.

"If that is all," said Skirnir, "I can win fair Gerda for you. Lend me your horse, Blodughofi, and give me your magic sword to be my own."

Frey lent him the horse and gave him the sword; and Skirnir promised to hasten on his journey.

Frey sent eleven golden apples and a magic golden ring, as gifts to Gerda. Still Skirnir lingered.

One day, as Frey was sitting near a pool, his face was reflected in the surface. Skirnir caught the reflection in his drinking horn, and covered it carefully. Then he started on his journey; for, with these three gifts, the golden apples, the magic ring, and the portrait of his handsome master, he was confident that he could win the beautiful maiden.

IV. SKIRNIR'S JOURNEY

Skirnir rode away to the land of the frost giants as fast as Frey's swift steed could carry him. As he came near Gymir's castle, he was stopped by the

terrible howling of the giant's watch dogs, Winter Winds.

He spoke to the shepherd who was watching the flocks in Gymir's fields. The shepherd said: "You cannot reach the castle. Even if you pass the dogs, it will be impossible for you to enter the gates, for the whole place is surrounded by fire. Don't you see how the flames light up the sky?"

Still Skirnir pressed on. He put spurs to his horse, and outran the dogs. Then he gave rein to Blodughofi, who plunged into the fire, and bore his rider safely to the steps of Gymir's castle. A servant opened the door and led the daring horseman into the presence of Gerda.

Skirnir offered her the golden apples and the magic ring, and showed her the portrait of his master, which he had taken from the pool. But she said, "My father has gold enough for me," and she did not care at all for the picture.

Then Skirnir threatened to cut off her head with the magic sword. He did not intend to do this, because he knew his master would not want a bride without a head. But she was not at all frightened. Then he cut runes in his stick, so that he could weave a magic spell about her. He told her that she would be married to an old frost giant, who would keep her hidden in his cold, dark castle. He

kept on cutting runes until she said: "Perhaps it would be better to marry handsome young Frey and live in Asgard, than to marry an ugly old frost giant and live in a dungeon. When spring comes, I will be Frey's bride."

Skirnir hurried back toward Asgard. But Frey, impatient to learn how he had succeeded, met him at Elfheim, and there, among the fairies, he learned that, when the trees budded and flowers bloomed and grass grew green again, he might go to the land of Buri, or green groves, to meet his bride.

Gerda met him in the land of Buri, as she had promised. They were married, and went to Frey's new palace in Asgard, where they lived happily ever after, and blessed the homes of married pairs who wished to live without strife.

V. PEACE-FRODI

Frey had a son named Frodi. Frodi lived in Midgard, or the world of men. He was good and wise, and men were glad to have him for a king. He began to reign in Denmark, when there was peace throughout the world. That was the time when Christ was born in Bethlehem. He was called Peace-Frodi.

He had a pair of magic millstones. They could

grind anything he wished, but there was no one in all his kingdom strong enough to turn them. He went to visit the king of Sweden, and saw, near the royal palace, two captive giants, who were eight feet tall. They could lift heavy weights, and hurl javelins to a great distance. He thought they would be able to turn his enchanted millstones. He bought the giants from their master. Their names were Menia and Fenia.

As soon as they came to Denmark, Frodi led them to the magic stones and bade them grind gold, peace, and prosperity. They turned the stones easily, and sang as they worked:—

Let us grind riches for Frodi!
Let us make him happy
In plenty of substance
On our magic Quern.[1]

They worked on hour after hour until their backs ached, and they could hardly stand from weariness. There was peace in the world, prosperity in the land, and the king's treasuries were filled with gold. The king had always been kind and gentle, but he was maddened by the sight of the gold, and, when the women begged to be allowed to rest, he sharply bade them work on. "Rest as long as the cuckoo

[1] Longfellow's translation, Grotta Savngr.

is silent in the spring," he said. "Alas," they replied, "the cuckoo is never silent in the spring." When they could work no longer, he gave them as much time to rest as would be required to sing one verse of their song.

But while Frodi slept, they changed their song, and began to grind an armed host, instead of gold. They sang: —

An army must come
Hither forthwith,
And burn the town
For the prince.[1]

A viking landed with his soldiers, and surprised the Danes. He defeated Frodi's army, and carried away the Danish treasure. He took Menia and Fenia, with their magic millstones, on board his own ship. He ordered them to grind salt, instead of gold. But he was as greedy as Frodi had become. He kept the giants at work until they were worn out. But they had already ground so much salt that its weight caused the ship to sink, and all on board perished. As the millstones sank, the water, rushing in, gurgled through the holes in the millstones, and made a great whirlpool. This whirlpool is off the northwestern coast of Norway, and is still known as the Maelstrom.

[1] Longfellow's translation, Grotta Savngr.

The salt dissolved and made all the water very salt, and the water of the sea is salt to this day.

VI. YULETIDE

Skirnir kept Frey's magic sword for his own, and he did not bring back the borrowed horse, Blodughofi. So, for a long time, Frey had neither sword nor horse. The dwarfs kindly supplied him with a swift steed, as we shall see. This was a boar called Gullinbursti, or Golden-bristle, which was, ever after, Frey's constant attendant. The golden bristles gave light, and were the rays of the sun; or, some say, the golden grain, which grew in Midgard, at the sun god's bidding. Gullinbursti, by tearing up the earth with his tusks, taught men to plow. Sometimes Frey rode on his back; and sometimes he harnessed him to his chariot, from which he scattered fruits and flowers, as he drove over the world. Sometimes his sister Freya rode with him in his chariot, and helped him in blessing men with fruits.

Boar's flesh was eaten at the festivals sacred to Frey. The roasted boar's head, crowned with laurel and rosemary, was brought into the dining room with great ceremony. The head of the household laid his hand upon it, and swore that

he would be faithful to his family and true to his promises. Then every one present followed his example.

The boar's head was then carved by a man of good character and great courage.

The helmets of Northern warriors were often ornamented with boars' heads, because that emblem of the conquering sun god was supposed to strike terror to the hearts of the enemy.

The longest night of the year was called Mother Night. It was a time of rejoicing, because the sun was then beginning his homeward journey. It was called Yuletide, or Wheeltide, because the sun was thought to be like a wheel rolling across the sky. A large wooden wheel was taken to the top of a high hill, wound well with straw, set on fire, and, when all ablaze, rolled down into the water, because the sight of the burning wheel suggested the sun's course through the heavens.

This Yule festival was kept in England for many years. As it occurred in the month of December, it was easily united with the festivities of Christmas.

At Yuletide, a huge log was brought in and burned in the great fireplace. It was a bad omen if it did not burn all night. In the morning, the charred pieces were gathered and saved to light the Yulelog the following year.

FREYA

I. HOW GOLD CAME TO BE HIDDEN IN THE ROCKS

FREYA was the daughter of Njord and Skadi. She was the goddess of beauty. She had golden hair and blue eyes. She had a commanding figure, and was clad in flowing robes. She wore a corselet and helmet, and carried a shield and a spear. She rode in a chariot drawn by two large gray cats. She admired brave men, and liked nothing so well as to reward a deed of valor. She visited battle fields, to choose, from the slain heroes, those who should be her guests at Folkvang, her palace in Asgard. The other slain warriors were taken to live with Odin in his great hall, Valhalla.

Folkvang was always filled with heroes and their wives and sweethearts. Northern women often rushed into battle, or fell upon swords, or were burned on the funeral pyre with their beloved dead, hoping that their courage and devotion would win Freya's favor, so that they might enjoy the society of their husbands and lovers in Folkvang.

Freya.

Freya was married to Odur, god of the summer sun. They had two daughters, who were so beautiful that all lovely and precious things were called by their names. All beautiful creatures were said to belong to Freya. Butterflies were called Freya's hens. Freya was always happy when she had her family together. But her husband, Odur, was too fond of travel. He always spent the winter in the Southland. This was a source of great grief to Freya. Once he left home without saying where he intended to go. Freya was heartbroken. She wept constantly. All nature wept with her. Hard rocks softened when her tears fell upon them. They opened their stony hearts to receive every shining drop, and hid it as pure gold. The sea treasured her tears, and threw them back upon the shore as clearest amber.

After long waiting, Freya went in search of her husband. She wandered through every part of the earth, weeping as she went. The earth kept her tears as fine gold. This is the reason that gold is found in all parts of the world.

II. WHY NORTHERN BRIDES WEAR MYRTLE

Freya found the missing Odur far away in the sunny Southland. He was sitting under a flowering

myrtle tree, watching the fleecy clouds change color in the rays of the setting sun. He was well and happy, and did not think how lonely his beautiful wife must be in the dark winter of the frozen North. But when she stood before him, he was glad to see her; and she was almost beside herself with joy.

Hand in hand, they returned to the Northland. Birds sang and flowers bloomed along their pathway, and spring followed their footsteps. Freya wore a garland of myrtle leaves; and to this day Northern brides wear myrtle wreaths instead of orange blossoms.

III. BRISINGA-MEN

Freya was fond of ornaments and jewels. One day, when passing through the land of the dark elves, she saw four dwarfs at work on a wonderful necklace. It was called Brisinga-men. It was an emblem of the fruitfulness of the earth. It was made of the most precious gems, which sparkled like stars. She begged the dwarfs to give her the beautiful necklace.

They said it should be hers if she would promise to grant them her favor forever. This was a great deal to ask; but the necklace was a masterpiece of art, and priceless in value. So she promised all they asked, and they clasped the necklace about her

neck. She wore it night and day. Once she lent it to Thor, when he went to the land of the giants; and once she lost it; but she always regarded it as her choicest treasure.

IV. HEIMDAL SAVES BRISINGA-MEN

The gods had just finished the rainbow bridge, which they built to connect Asgard with Midgard and Urdar Fountain. This bridge was made of fire, air, and water. These three things can still be seen in the rainbow; fire in the red, air in the blue, and water in the green. All the gods except Thor passed over the bridge every day, on their way to their council chamber at Urdar Fountain. Thor was still obliged to harness his goats to his iron chariot and drive in the old way, because they all feared that his heavy tread and the heat of the lightnings, which always attended him, would destroy the beautiful bridge. They feared also that the giants would take advantage of the new bridge to force an entrance into Asgard. So they decided to appoint a guard for the rainbow bridge.

Heimdal was the son of the nine wave daughters of Ægir, ruler of the sea. His nine mothers fed him on the strength of the earth, the moisture of the sea, and the heat of the sun. He grew very

fast and could do many remarkable things. He could hear the grass growing in the fields, and the wool on the sheep's backs. He could see at a distance of one hundred miles, as clearly by night as by day. He needed less sleep than a bird. He was very beautiful, and had gold teeth which flashed when he smiled. He was always clothed in pure white, and carried a glittering sword.

The gods decided to take Heimdal to Asgard, and then they appointed him to be guard of the rainbow bridge. They built him a palace on the highest point of the bridge, and gave him a golden-maned horse called Gull-top, and a wonderful trumpet called Giallar-horn. The trumpet was to be used only when he saw the enemies of the gods approaching. Then he would know that the Twilight of the Gods was near at hand, and the sound of the trumpet would arouse all creatures in heaven and earth and the land of the mist.

One night Heimdal was disturbed by the sound of footsteps in the direction of Freya's palace. He soon found that the noise was made by Loki, who had just changed himself into a fly, in order to enter Freya's chamber window. Once within her room, he resumed his usual form, and tried to take the precious necklace, Brisinga-men, from her neck, as she lay asleep. Her head was turned so that he

could not reach the clasp without waking her. He stepped back and muttered magic runes. He began to shrink, and shrank and shrank until he shrank into the size and shape of a flea. Then he made his way under the cover and bit Freya's side until she turned in her sleep. He became Loki again, unclasped the necklace, and stole away.

Heimdal mounted Gull-top and galloped over the rainbow bridge. He met the robber just outside the gates of Asgard, and drew his sword. Quick as thought, Loki became a faint blue flame. Heimdal changed himself into a cloud, and poured torrents of rain upon the flame. Then the flame became a great white bear, which drank up the water. The cloud became a bear also, and the two bears fought until Loki slipped into the water in the form of a seal. Heimdal became a seal, and pursued Loki until he gave up the necklace, which was sent back to Freya so quickly that she never knew it had been stolen.

But Heimdal had been badly hurt in his struggle with Loki. Iduna came and bound up his wounds, and healed them with a golden apple.

SIF'S HAIR

I. A NOONDAY NAP

SIF was the beautiful wife of the stern thunder god, Thor. She called the sunshine and the gentle winds to make the grass grow and the grain ripen. Thor brought dark rain clouds to water the growing crops. Thor was very proud of his pretty wife, especially of her long silky hair.

One day while Thor had gone to water the cornfields, Sif was sitting on a grassy bank combing her hair, and watching the reflection in a glassy pool. The noonday heat had made her drowsy, and she fell asleep. Loki, the mischief maker, came by; and, seeing Sif asleep, thought what fun it would be to cut off her hair. He laughed to himself as he imagined how the thunder god would rage. So he sheared Sif's golden fleece, and shaved her head until it was as bare as the round white arm on which it rested. Then he hid in a thicket to see what would happen.

Poor Sif awoke, and cried aloud for Thor. Soon she heard the rumbling of his iron chariot; and, as

he came near enough to see her bald pate, lightnings flashed from his eyes.

Thoroughly frightened, Loki changed himself into a salmon, and leaped into the river. Thor saw him, and in the shape of a sea gull, poised over the water, darted down into it, and came up with the fish in his talons. Loki could not wriggle away; so he took his own form again, and was begging for mercy, when Frey came up. Loki fell on his knees and kissed Frey's feet, and promised to get golden hair for Sif, that would grow as her own had done, a swift steed for Frey, and a new hammer for Thor, if the gentle sun god would save his life. By Frey's advice, Thor let him go.

II. LOKI IN ELFHEIM

Loki rode away over the rainbow bridge, down through dark passages under the earth. Suddenly the light of Elfheim flashed upon him. The light was made by the fires of the busy dwarfs in their tiny forges and smelting furnaces. Brilliant gems sparkled in the roof. Gold gleamed everywhere. He watched the work of the little fellows with great interest. He saw one making pearls from dewdrops and from maidens' tears. Another made emeralds from the first green leaves of spring.

Others made rubies from rosebuds, and sapphires from violets. He spoke to one who was making diamonds; and the dwarf answered politely, without looking up, that they did not work in gold, in that part of Elfheim; that he must go to Ivald's sons, who could make anything they chose.

So he went on to the forge of Ivald's sons. It was the brightest nook in all the brilliant cavern.

Ivald's sons listened to Loki's story, and began at once to make the golden hair for Sif. First, they threw gold into the furnace. It was melted and drawn seven times. Then one of Ivald's sons sent it to his wife, who sat among the spinners in another part of the hall. She put it on a distaff, as if it were flax, and spun and spun until the golden threads were as fine as silk and as soft as gossamer. She sent it back to her husband by the brown elf who had brought it, and Ivald's sons gave it to Loki, who thanked the kind little smiths and said, "Now make me a hammer for Thor."

Ivald's sons shook their heads, and said, "We cannot make a present for Thor, because we have never made one for Odin, who is greater than Thor."

Loki was disappointed in not getting a hammer for Thor; but was pleased at the prospect of taking a valuable present to Odin.

Ivald's sons put iron into the furnace, heated it, drew it out, rolled it on the anvil, and hammered it with sledges. They made a spear. It was inlaid with precious stones, and tipped with gold seven times tried. They gave it to Loki, saying, "This is the mighty spear, Gungnir, that never fails in its blow, the best gift we humble smiths can make great Odin."

They again put gold into the furnace. They blew with the bellows, until the black smoke rolled up the chimney, and the fire blazed up enough to light the whole cavern. They worked fast and faithfully. At last the fire died away, and a ship appeared in the coals. It kept growing larger and larger, until it almost filled the room. It had masts and sails, and places for oarsmen, and room enough to carry a thousand soldiers with their horses. Then, at a word from one of Ivald's sons, it began to shrink, and it grew smaller until he took it up and folded it like a napkin. He gave it to Loki, and said: "Take it to gentle Frey. It is the good ship, Skidbladnir, which will always have favorable winds, whatever way he wishes to go. It is large enough to carry him and all who need to go with him; and when he does not want to use it, he can fold it and put it in his pocket."

Loki thanked the smiths again, and started to go

home, heavy-hearted because he had no hammer for Thor and no swift steed for Frey.

III. SINDRI'S GIFTS

As Loki was about to leave Elfheim he met two brown elves, Brok and his brother Sindri. Brok had overheard Loki saying that Ivald's sons were the best smiths. Now Brok's brother, Sindri, had always been called the best smith. Brok offered to wager his head against Loki's head that his brother could make three better gifts than the three gifts Ivald's sons had made.

They went together to Sindri's forge; and Sindri, proud of his brother's confidence, told him not to be afraid, but that together they would be sure to win.

He gave Brok the bellows, saying, "Blow the fire steadily, until I tell you to stop." Then he put a pigskin into the furnace. Loki slipped out of sight, and came back in the shape of a horsefly, and settled on Brok's hand. The fly bit hard, but Brok kept on blowing, until Sindri said, "Enough!"

Then Sindri took from the fire a boar with golden bristles. "This," said he, "is Gullinbursti, or Golden-bristle. He will carry Frey wherever he wishes to go, over land or sea. He is swifter than

any horse, and the shining of his golden bristles will give light in the darkest night."

Then he threw gold into the fire, and told Brok to blow as before. The horsefly lighted on Brok's neck, and bit as hard as he could. Still Brok kept on blowing, until Sindri cried, "Enough!"

This time a fine gold ring, set with precious stones, came out of the fire. As Sindri took it up, he said: "This ring is Draupnir. From it eight rings exactly like itself will drop every ninth night. It is a gift to Odin."

Sindri threw a bar of iron into the fire, and told Brok to blow with the bellows, just as he had been doing. The fly lighted on Brok's eyelid, and bit until the blood ran down into his eye. Just as Sindri was about to say "Enough," the fly stung so hard that Brok raised his hand to dash it away. The flame leaped up and then died out. Sindri rushed to the furnace in great alarm. He took out a hammer all finished, only the handle was a little too short. Loki now appeared in his own form.

"Go now," said Brok. "My brother has won the bet. This is Mjolnir, the Crusher, fit for the mighty hand of Thor. It will protect Asgard from all the attacks of the giants. When hurled against the enemy it will go straight to the mark, and Thor

cannot throw it so far that it will not return to his hand again. This is the best of all the gifts."

IV. THE DECISION

Loki went home. He gave the golden hair to Thor, who placed it on Sif's head, and it began to grow at once.

Frey was well pleased with the ship, Skidbladnir.

Kind Odin smiled graciously, as he took the burnished spear, Gungnir.

Brok had come to Asgard, to bring the gifts made by his brother. Odin, Thor, and Frey sat together to compare the gifts, and to decide the wager of Loki and Brok.

Brok gave the hammer, Mjolnir, to Thor; and when Thor swung it in his strong right hand, he became as tall as a giant, dark clouds rolled around him, lightnings flashed, and peals of thunder shook the heights of Asgard.

Odin let the brown elf place the ring, Draupnir, upon his finger; and Frey at last had a swift steed, Golden-bristle.

All declared that the hammer, Mjolnir, was the best gift; and they also thought that the ring and the steed were better than the gifts of Loki.

Then Brok demanded the head of Loki, but

Loki had run away. Thor soon brought him back, and the elf raised his sword. But Loki cried: "Although my head is yours, you cannot touch my neck. There was nothing said about the neck."

So Brok had to be satisfied without Loki's head; but he was laden with rich gifts from Thor and Sif; and the gods consented to his sewing up Loki's mouth. But Loki's lips were so tough that the elf could not pierce them with his needle, nor could he cut them with his sword. "If I only had my brother's awl," said he; and, as soon as he had wished for the awl, it was in his hand. He sewed up Loki's mouth, but the mischief maker soon contrived to cut the thread, and talked again as merrily as ever.

FENRIS WOLF

LOKI'S CHILDREN

Loki had seven children. Three of them were bad children, and he did not want the gods to know about them. Their mother was a giantess, who was glad to have Loki build his palace in the land of the giants. But Odin found out about Loki's home, and ordered the three bad children to be brought to Asgard. Their names were Iörmungandr, Hela, and Fenris.

As soon as Odin saw them, he knew that he could do nothing for the two older ones. So he sent Iörmungandr to live in the bottom of the ocean, where he lay coiled around Midgard. He was the Midgard serpent. He was so long that when he had encircled the whole earth he was compelled to take his tail in his mouth. When he struggled to rise from his ocean bed, the waves dashed high, and fearful storms swept over the deep.

Hela was sent to Niflheim, where she ruled over the dead, except the heroes slain in battle, and their wives and sweethearts.

The gods thought that Fenris might grow better if he lived with them in Asgard. So, when the

other two children were sent away, he was kept in the holy city.

He was a bad boy, and had snapped and snarled so long that he was called Fenris Wolf. He walked on his hands and feet. Hair grew all over his body. He had great hungry jaws, and he liked to eat the things that wolves eat.

The older he grew, the worse he became. He was more than ever like a wolf. He even kept the gods awake by howling on moonlight nights. He was already very large and was growing very fast, and Odin was worried about him. He called a council of all the gods to see what could be done with Fenris Wolf.

Heimdal, the guard of the rainbow bridge, and Bragi, and gentle Frey, thought the mighty spear, Gungnir, or Thor's new hammer, Mjolnir, could soon put an end to the wolf. But Odin and Thor and Tyr, the god of war, thought it would not be right to shed blood, unless it were that of an enemy, within the walls of Asgard. Balder, the Good, thought it would be better to kill the dangerous wolf, than to feed him every day a pigeon, a chicken, a lamb, and a calf. But Odin decided that he must be bound and not killed. Tyr alone dared touch him, and he coaxed Fenris Wolf away from the palaces to a hill within the city walls.

II. THE BONDS OF FENRIS WOLF

Sometimes the gods played games of strength and skill, and they often asked Fenris Wolf to join them. They were not afraid of him at such times, for it pleased him to show how strong he was.

There was a blacksmith's shop in Asgard; and, by Odin's order, strong iron fetters were made for Fenris Wolf. When it was time for the games to begin, the gods showed these fetters to Fenris; and he, knowing that he could break them as easily as Thor could break a thread, allowed himself to be bound. No sooner were they fastened than he broke them, as if they were wisps of grass.

Then the gods helped the smith, and together they made long, heavy chains, larger and heavier than had ever been seen. Fenris Wolf was not quite so ready to be bound with these; but they told him he could easily break them, and flattered him by tales of his great strength. So he let them bind his huge feet, and wind his body with the heavy chains, until he was covered with the links of iron. The gods did not think he could break loose, but he threw himself upon the ground and struggled hard. The big chains snapped as if they had been made of flax, and Fenris Wolf was free.

Then Odin sent to the dwarfs and elves. In a few days, the messengers came back with slender, silken bands. They were magic bands, and were made of six things that only dwarfs and elves could obtain. These things were the noise of the footfall of a cat, the beard of a woman, the roots of stones, the breath of fishes, the nerves of bears, and the sweat of birds. The gods then invited Fenris to play with them.

He was afraid of the silken bands, because he thought that there was magic about them. The gods laughed, because such a great strong fellow as he feared little strips of silk. So Fenris said that if Tyr would let him hold his right hand in his mouth, he would consent to be bound. Brave Tyr knew what that meant; but he stepped to Fenris's side, and put his right hand into the wolf's mouth, while the other gods fastened the silken bands.

Then the great wolf howled and struggled, and bit Tyr's hand until he bit it off; but he could not break the magic bands.

When he was tired out, the gods carried him to a great rock, to which they fastened him securely, with heavy iron chains. His bonds were never broken until the time of Ragnarok, or the Twilight of the Gods.

LOKI AND SKRYMSLI

I. THE PEASANT'S TROUBLE

Loki was not always bad. He was fond of mischief, and his pranks soon grew into practical jokes. But he was kind sometimes, and generous when it did not cost too much.

Once a peasant played chess with a giant. The stake was the peasant's only son. The giant, whose name was Skrymsli, won the game, and said he would come for the boy the next day. But if the parents could hide the child so that he could not find him, he would give up his claim.

In their distress the peasants prayed to Odin for help. The All-father came to earth, changed the boy into a kernel of wheat, hid him in an ear of grain in a large field, and assured the anxious father and mother that the giant would not be able to find him.

The following day the giant came, searched the house, but failed to find the boy. Then he took the scythe and mowed the field of wheat. He selected a handful of ears, and chose the ear that

held the enchanted kernel. He was picking out the right grain of wheat, when Odin, hearing the cry of the child, snatched him from the giant's hand and returned him to his parents. But, he said, they must take care of him now, for he could do no more.

Then they called on Odin's brother, Hœnir, who changed the boy into down, and hid him in the breast of a swan that was swimming in a pond near by.

When the giant came, he went to the pond, caught the swan, bit off its head, and was about to swallow the down, when Hœnir wafted it away from his lips and sent it into the cottage. He gave the boy back to his parents, but declared that he could do no more.

II. LOKI COMES TO THE RESCUE

In despair, they invoked the aid of Loki, who came at once, carried the boy out to sea, changed him into a tiny egg, and hid him in the roe of a flounder. Then he rowed back to shore, where he found the giant preparing for a fishing excursion.

"Come with me," said Loki, "I will show you a good place to fish for herring."

But Skrymsli wanted to fish for flounders, and thought he could do very well alone. Loki, there-

fore, insisted on going with him. Skrymsli rowed as far as he wished to go, baited his hook, caught several fish, and, at last, drew up the flounder in which Loki had concealed the precious egg. Then he rowed back to shore. Loki snatched the egg and set the boy on the landing, saying, "Run home now; but go through the boat house and shut the door behind you."

The frightened boy obeyed, and the giant rushed after him. But Loki had fixed a spike in the boat house so that it should strike Skrymsli's head as he passed through. He fell; and Loki, following, cut off one of his legs.

To Loki's surprise, the pieces grew together again. He saw that it was the work of magic, but he cut off the other one, and threw a flint and steel between the leg and the body, which broke the charm, and the giant died.

The thankful parents ever after regarded Loki as the greatest of the three gods, because he had delivered them from their trouble, while the others had only helped them for a little time.

THRYM

I. THOR LOSES HIS HAMMER

One night Thor had troubled dreams. He thought he saw a giant hand reaching for his hammer, Mjolnir. He fancied Sif had lost her hair again. He seemed to hear distant thunder, as if a storm were raging, without his order. This brought him to his feet. He stretched out his hand for his hammer, but the pale moonlight showed him an empty shelf. Mjolnir was gone.

His first thought was of Loki, the mischief maker. But, for once, Loki knew nothing about the trouble. Still Loki said he thought he could find the hammer, if Freya would lend him her falcon dress.

In the gray light of early dawn, Thor and Loki went to Freya's palace, and waked the summer goddess from her morning nap. She was very sorry to hear of Thor's loss, and readily lent him her falcon dress. Loki put it on, and flew away to Thrymheim.

He found Thrym, the winter giant, king of all the frost giants, making collars of gold braid for his

dogs, and gold trappings for his horses. Sitting at the door of his house, he received Loki very kindly. In reply to Loki's question about Thor's hammer, he said: "I have horses and dogs as swift as the wind. I have cows with golden horns, and all-black oxen. I have gold, and jewels, and servants. All I need to make me perfectly happy is a gentle and beautiful wife. I have buried Thor's troublesome hammer eight miles under the earth; and there it will stay until you bring me fair Freya, the summer goddess, to be my wife, and live in my wintry home."

Loki was angry, but said he would see what could be done.

II. THOR AS A BRIDE

Loki flew back to Asgard, and told Thor what Thrym had said.

"Freya must go," said Thor; "for I must have my hammer," and they went again to Freya's palace to tell her to put on her bridal garments.

But Freya refused to go to Thrymheim, and said she would never marry Thrym, the king of the frost giants.

The gods and goddesses heard of Thor's loss, of the winter giant's threat to keep the hammer, and of his demand for Freya. They all met in the hall

of justice, to see what they could do, to induce Thrym to give up the hammer.

Heimdal was the first to speak. "Dress Thor in bridal garments white as snow," said he. "Let flowing robes cover his feet. Fasten a bunch of keys, the badge of the housewife, to his girdle. Clasp a necklace of brilliant gems about his neck, even Freya's precious necklace, Brisinga-men. Throw a bridal veil over his head, and let him go to Thrym in Thrymheim."

All the other gods applauded this speech; but bold Thor was afraid to put on woman's dress. He thought the gods would laugh at him; but he could see no other way to get the hammer, and the hammer he must have.

By this time, Loki had forgotten his anger, and was anxious to see how Thor would act in bridal robes; so he said, "Dress me as the bride's waiting maid, and let me go too."

The goddesses searched their wardrobes, to find draperies of snowy white, large enough to cover Thor's sinewy form, and a veil thick with rich embroidery, to hide his bright red beard and his lightning-flashing eyes. At last they were ready, the bride and the maid. Thor's goats were harnessed to his rumbling iron chariot; and away they went to Thrymheim.

III. THE WEDDING FEAST

Thrym was expecting his bride. He bade his servants make the great hall ready for the wedding feast. Tables were set with costly dishes, and a great abundance of food was prepared, rich and delicate, such as he supposed would suit the taste of a goddess from Asgard. Great kettles were filled with sparkling mead; and all awaited the arrival of the bride.

Thrym heard the noise of the iron chariot; and soon the bride, attended by her maid, was led to the place of honor in the banquet hall. Her appetite was very good. She ate a whole ox, eight large salmon, and all the cakes and sweetmeats; and drank two barrels of mead.

Loki, the maid, seeing Thrym's astonishment, whispered, "She has eaten nothing for eight days, she has been so anxious to come to the land of the giants."

Pleased at this, Thrym raised the veil to look at the bride's face. One glance of her eyes sent him to the opposite end of the hall.

"Why are her eyes so piercing?" he asked the maid. "Because," Loki answered, "she has not slept for eight nights, she has so longed for the land of the giants."

Thrym was glad to hear this, and wanted to have the marriage ceremony performed at once. But, true to his promise, he first ordered the hammer brought.

Then the winter giant's sister, Famine, came in and asked, from the bride, a ring as a wedding present. Before an answer could be made, a servant laid the hammer on Thor's knees.

Thor rose at once. Lightnings flashed from his eyes. Peals of thunder shook the house. The winter giant and his sister fell to the floor. Thor and Loki leaped into the chariot and drove back to Asgard. The walls of the house crumbled to earth, and farmers sowed grain where the banquet hall had been.

ÆGIR'S FEAST

I. ÆGIR WANTS A KETTLE

ÆGIR was the giant king of the ocean. Once a year, he invited the gods and goddesses to a feast in his great banquet hall under the ocean. They all liked to go, for Ægir was a good-natured giant and a genial host. There was always enough of everything, except mead; that sometimes fell short, because Ægir's kettles were always too small, and now the largest one had been stolen. Thor, who was very fond of mead, said he would get a large kettle, if he only knew where to find one.

Tyr, the god of war, was of a giant race. His father was Hymir, the giant of winter darkness; and his mother was the beautiful goddess of light. Tyr said his father had a kettle a mile deep, and he thought Thor could get it.

The goats were harnessed to the iron chariot, and Thor and Tyr set out for the land of the giants. After three days' journey, they came to the house of Hymir. It was late in the afternoon, about time for Hymir to come in from fishing.

The giant's wife, Tyr's mother, was very glad to see them, and invited them to supper. She was very beautiful; but her companion in the house, Hymir's mother, was dreadful to look upon. Hymir's mother was a giantess with nine hundred heads, and every head was toothless, blind, and deaf.

Tyr's mother said her husband was not always glad to see company; and, when they heard him coming, it would be safer to hide under the kettles at the farther end of the hall. Soon the door opened, and Hymir came in, bringing a net, in which were a few whales and some other creatures from the sea. His hair and beard glistened with frozen spray. His wife spoke to him kindly, and told him that their son Tyr had come home, and had brought a friend with him. "Where are they now?" growled Hymir. "In the other end of the hall," answered his wife. Hymir looked so fiercely at a beam on which the kettles hung, that all but one fell down. Then the gods came out to greet the giant, who was put in better humor by the sight of his son, and by the flashing of Thor's eyes.

When supper was ready, they sat down to the table together. Three oxen were served. Thor ate two of them. "At this rate," grumbled Hymir,

" we shall have to go fishing, to get enough to eat."
" Nothing would please me better," said Thor.

II. HOW THOR FISHED

The next morning, Hymir called to Thor: " Get up and get your own bait, if you want to go with me." Thor went out, and soon came back with the head of the best ox in all the giant's herd. Gruff old Hymir could say little, since he had sent his guest to catch his own bait; but he hurried to the boat as fast as he could, for fear Thor might want more bait. They took the oars, and both began to row.

In a few minutes Hymir said, " I always stop here to fish." But Thor answered that it was not worth while to stop so near the shore, and rowed on until they were out of sight of land. Hymir said, " This is a good place to fish for whales." But Thor thought they had not gone quite far enough yet, and rowed out to mid-ocean. They stopped and baited their hooks. Hymir drew in two whales at once. Thor fastened the head of the ox on his hook, and began to pay out the line. Down went the ox head deeper and deeper, until it hung just above the jaws of the Midgard serpent, the great serpent that encircled the earth.

The serpent opened its dull eyes, and took the head into its mouth. The hook stuck fast in its throat. Thor pulled in his line, and up came the serpent. Thor pulled harder and harder until he broke the bottom of the boat, and his feet went through to the rocks under the sea. The serpent struggled; the sky grew black; the waves roared. Thor raised his hammer to strike the serpent's head, but Hymir had cut the line, and the serpent sank to its old place. The sea became calm. Thor took the boat in his arms, and he and Hymir waded back to shore. They had the two whales for supper.

III. THOR GETS THE KETTLE

After supper, Thor asked the giant for his largest kettle. Handing him a very large cup, Hymir answered, "If you can break that cup, you may have the kettle."

Thor threw the cup at a stone bench. The bench broke; but the cup was not hurt. He picked it up, and threw it at a stone pillar. The pillar flew into a thousand pieces; but the cup did not break.

Tyr's mother whispered, "Throw it at Hymir's head." Thor did so, and the cup was shattered.

"Now go," said Hymir, "and take the kettle, if you can carry it."

At first Thor could only tip the kettle a very little; but, after he had put on his iron gloves of strength, he raised it over his head; even then the ears of the kettle dragged on the ground.

Thor and Tyr started to go out to the iron chariot; but, hearing a great uproar behind them, they looked back and saw Hymir with a host of frost giants coming after them, armed with sticks and stones. Thor threw his hammer among them, and they became a row of snow-covered mountains. Then the two gods drove away to Ægir's halls, and gave him the great kettle of the giant Hymir.

THOR AND SKRYMIR

I. A BACKWARD SPRING

One spring the giants had been behaving very badly. The storm giants had gone to the far north and troubled the great eagle, Hræsvelger. They made him fly many times, although they knew that every time he lifted his wings, the icy winds rushed out from his feathers and froze the twelve great rivers of the north. The frost giants laughed to see great blocks of ice floating down to destroy the homes of men; and the mountain giants tossed snow and ice from their shoulders upon the plowed fields.

The cold lasted so long that farmers could hardly prepare the ground for seed. After the seed had been sown, the cold winds kept it from sprouting. After it had begun to grow, the storms beat down the young crops, and seemed likely to destroy them all.

Except Balder the Good, and Frey, the gentle sun god, rough Thor was the only god who really cared for the farmers. He was sometimes very

boisterous, but had a kind heart. It made him sad to see the poor farmers work so hard and get so little; and he wanted to do something to help them. So he harnessed his two goats to his iron chariot, took his iron gloves, his girdle of strength, and his hammer; and, with Loki for a traveling companion, set out for the land of the giants.

II. THE SUPPER IN THE COTTAGE

At the close of the first day, they came to a cottage in the edge of a wood. They stopped and asked food and shelter for themselves and their goats. Shelter the poor people gladly gave them; but they had no food. It was a long way to another house, and Thor and Loki were tired and hungry. Thor raised his hammer, and killed his goats. The cottager dressed the meat; his wife cooked it; and there was soon a great platter of goat's flesh steaming on the table.

Thor asked the man and his wife and their two children to have supper with himself and Loki. It was a rare treat to the children, who had seldom tasted meat. Thor said the bones must be left unbroken and thrown into the goatskins, which he had spread before the fireplace, because he had a use for them afterward.

While Thor was talking with the father and mother, Loki whispered to the children that the choicest part was hidden within the bones. The boy, Thialfi, broke a thigh bone, ate the marrow, and threw the pieces on the heap, with the others.

In the morning, Thor and Loki rose early and began to prepare for their journey. The cottager and his family wondered what Thor would do with his iron chariot, since the goats had been killed and eaten. They were amazed to see him strike the goatskins with his hammer, and astonished to see the goats jump up as lively as if they themselves had had warm shelter and good food, instead of having made supper for others.

Thor harnessed the goats to his chariot, and started to drive away; but one of the goats limped badly. Thor saw at once that its thigh bone had been broken. He raised his hammer in anger. The poor people fell on their knees and begged for mercy. Thialfi confessed his disobedience; and Thor forgave the offense on condition that Thialfi and his sister, Roskva, should be his servants forever. As there was no other way to save the lives of either themselves or their children, the parents consented. Then Thor relented a little, and said the children might come home often. He charged the man to take good care of his goats until his

return; and, with Loki, Thialfi, and Roskva, he started on foot for the land of the giants.

III. THE SNORING GIANT

The four traveled all day through a bleak and desolate country. At sunset, the prospect was still more dismal; and, to add to their discomfort, a thick gray mist settled down upon them. For a long time they wandered about in search of shelter for the night. At last Thor saw the dim outline of a queer-shaped house. The entrance was very wide and high, and seemed to take up the whole side of the house. They went in, but found it empty. They lay down on the floor, and soon fell asleep.

They were waked by a strange trembling of the house. They were frightened by rumbling noises frequently repeated and greatly prolonged. Believing this to be an earthquake, and fearing the walls might fall and crush them, Thor sent Loki, Thialfi, and Roskva into a wing of the house, while he grasped his hammer and guarded the main entrance.

In the early morning, they continued their journey. They had gone but a little way, when they saw a steep hill directly in their path. As they came nearer, they noticed that the hill trembled, and they heard again the rumbling noises of the

night before. Suddenly they heard a great sigh, and saw a giant raise his head. Then they knew that what had seemed a hill was the prostrate body of a giant, and that the trembling of the house and the sounds they had mistaken for an earthquake had been caused by his snoring.

The giant looked about as if he had lost something. His eyes rested upon Thor and his companions, and he exclaimed, "What have you little fellows done with my glove?" Before they could answer that they had not seen his glove, he said, "Oh, here it is!" and, reaching out, picked up the house in which they had spent the night. The wing in which they had taken refuge from the supposed earthquake was the thumb of the glove.

The giant recognized Thor, and seemed very glad to see him. He kindly asked where they were going, and when he found they were on the way to Utgard, the realm of the giants, he offered to be their guide, and said his name was Skrymir.

IV. NIGHT IN THE WOODS

They walked all day together. At night Skrymir said he was more sleepy than hungry, and gave his bag of food to Thor to divide with his compan-

ions. Thor pulled the string, and tugged at the knot, but could not unfasten the bag. With an abundant supply of food in his hands, he could neither eat nor give to the others.

Worn out with walking and long fasting, the gods and their servants tried to rest. But the giant had begun to snore, and sleep was impossible. Disgusted and angry, Thor drew tighter his girdle of strength, and hurled his hammer at the giant's head. Skrymir woke enough to rub the place with his hand and ask sleepily whether a leaf had fallen on his head.

At midnight, the snoring was terrific. Thor dealt a fearful blow on the giant's crown. Skrymir, roused from sleep, said that he thought an acorn had fallen.

Toward morning, it seemed to the tired gods that they must get a little sleep. Thor threw his hammer with all his might at the giant's temple. Skrymir rose and said quietly: "Some birds must have dropped a piece of stick from their nest, for my temple is bruised. We must go now; I to the north, and you to the east. You will soon come to Utgard. There you will find men larger than I. Be careful not to offend them." The giant disappeared in the woods, and the gods kept on as directed.

V. SPORTS AT UTGARD

At noon they came in sight of Utgard. No one noticed their approach. When they knocked at the gate, no one came to admit them. So they slipped between the bars, and went to the palace of the prince of the giants.

He was sitting on his throne, and many of his warriors and courtiers were resting on stone benches in the great hall. For a long time no notice was taken of the intruders, and then all the giants stared in surprise at the unbidden guests. The prince addressed them as "little people," and said: "I know you, Thor, and you can do more than one would think from your appearance. Now tell me what each one can do; for no one is welcome here, unless he is good for something."

Loki, who was almost famished, boasted of his ability to eat.

The prince at once ordered meat; and the trial began between Loki and the prince's cook, Logi.

A wooden platter, filled with meat, was placed between them. Loki ate rapidly, and met his opponent at the middle of the dish; but, to his great surprise, he found that while he had eaten the meat, Logi had devoured meat, bones, and platter, too.

Thialfi said he was swift of foot.

"Very well," said the prince; "run a race with Hugin."

At the first trial, Hugin reached the goal a little in advance of Thialfi. "Very good," said the prince; "try again."

The second time, Thialfi was still further behind; and, at the third trial, he had run only half the course when Hugin reached the goal.

Thor, who was very thirsty, said he could drink a great deal.

The prince ordered a servant to bring a drinking horn, which, he said, some could empty at one draught, many at two, and he was a poor drinker indeed who could not drain it at three.

Thor looked at the horn. It was long, but very narrow; and he thought his task an easy one. But the first draught barely uncovered the rim; the second only a little more; and the third lowered the liquid, perhaps, two or three inches. Much chagrined, Thor set the horn down, and began to boast of his strength.

The prince told him to pick up the gray cat that lay at the foot of the throne.

At the first trial, he hardly moved the cat. Then he seized her firmly about the middle, and made her arch her back. The third time, he lifted one paw from the ground.

Very angry, Thor's eyes flashed lightnings. "Let me wrestle with one of your courtiers," he cried.

The prince thoughtfully stroked his beard. "Try first," he replied, "what you can do against my old nurse, Elli."

A feeble, bent old woman entered the hall and took strong Thor in her grasp. Thor used all his might, but she compelled him to sink down on one knee.

"Enough!" cried the prince. "Sit down now to the feast."

VI. SKRYMIR'S MAGIC

The strangers were well cared for that night; and, the next morning, the prince himself led them out as far as the wood.

"This," said he, "is the boundary of my domain. You would never have crossed it, had I known you were so powerful. Let me tell you the tricks I have played on you.

"It was I who met you in the forest. Three times Thor struck me with his hammer. The first blow would have killed me, had I not shoved a mountain between us. The second was a terrible shock, though the mountain broke the force of the blow. The third crashed through the mountain and bruised my temple. As you go back, you will

see three great fissures cut in the solid rock, one of which reaches the home of the black elves; and they were all made by the blows of your hammer.

"Loki had an excellent appetite; but my cook, Logi, who was matched against him, is wildfire, which swallows up everything in its path.

"Thialfi runs well; but Hugin, who is my thought, has no rival.

"The end of the long drinking horn touched the ocean. Thor drank so much that every shore was uncovered.

"The gray cat was the Midgard serpent. Thor lifted her so far that the great serpent almost escaped its prison at the bottom of the sea.

"Elli, my poor old nurse, is old age, who at last conquers every one. Thor fought bravely; but the bravest are at last overcome by old age.

"Go now, and seek no more to bring your farmers within my realm. Mine are the eternal rocks and ice rivers. Though you rend them with thunderbolts, there will be no place for your precious grains to take root."

Thor raised his hammer to punish the giant, but he was gone. The glittering walls of the palace had vanished. There was only a rock-strewn waste covered with clouds and mist.

Thor and his Team of Goats.

THOR'S DUEL WITH HRUNGNIR

I. THOR AT HOME

THOR went back to his palace, Bilskirnir, to rest after the tiresome journey. His wife, Sif, was more beautiful than ever. Her golden locks were more luxuriant than her flaxen tresses had ever been. She was in her happiest mood. She charmed her big husband with lively accounts of the doings of his little son, Magni, now three years old. She also had a story to tell of their daughter, Thrud.

Thrud was fair, like her mother; and tall and strong, like her father; and kind, like both. She had many admirers, but liked best little Alvis, the dwarf. Alvis was a favorite with the gods, because he was wise and good. Just the night before, he had come into their council chamber, to ask their permission to try to win the hand of Thrud; and they had given their consent. The only question now was what Thor would say.

Thor did not like to oppose all the gods, but he did not want his handsome daughter to marry a dwarf. He said very little, however; and no one guessed what he was about to do.

When Alvis came, Thor received him very graciously, and talked with him almost all night. When morning began to dawn, Thor was still asking questions about the wonderful things done in Elfheim, and the marvelous skill of the dwarfs and dark elves. Thor knew that if the sun shone on a dwarf, he would be turned into stone. So he kept on talking with Alvis, who answered all his questions promptly and correctly. He was asking about the language of the dwarfs, elves, and vanas, when the sunlight fell on Alvis's head, and he became a marble statue. This statue ever after stood in the council chamber of the gods, as a warning to too ambitious dwarfs.

II. THE RACE

The giants had been remarkably quiet. Thor and Sif were expecting a fruitful season, and had promised the peasants an abundant harvest. Suddenly news came that the mountain giants were sending down avalanches and falling rocks and floods upon the farmers, who had ventured too near their strongholds. The poor farmers appealed to Thor for help; and he took his hammer and went out to see what could be done.

Odin was away from home, attending to battles and searching for wisdom. One day he was enter-

tained at the house of the mountain giant, Hrungnir. When they were talking, after dinner, Hrungnir said: "Sleipnir is a good horse; but my horse Gullfaxi is better. He can leap further with four feet than Sleipnir can with eight." Odin at once challenged him to a race. Sleipnir, Odin's eight-footed steed, stood before the door. Odin leaped upon his back and galloped away. Hrungnir followed on Gullfaxi. But Sleipnir was as swift as the wind; and, before Hrungnir, mad with the chase, knew what he was doing, Gullfaxi had galloped over the rainbow bridge, and had stopped at the very gate of Valhalla.

Odin, who had arrived some time before, came out to make the giant welcome and lead him into the banquet hall. The goddesses brought him food and drink. But he was only a giant, and misunderstood the hospitality of the gods. He became very arrogant, and boasted that at some time he would destroy Asgard and all the gods, and carry Freya and Sif away to the land of the giants.

The gods were very much alarmed, and cried aloud for Thor. Thor came at once, and entered the hall in time to hear what the giant said about Sif. This made Thor very angry. Lightnings flashed from his eyes; and his grasp tightened on his hammer.

The frightened giant begged for his life. He said Odin had invited him to the feast; that he was unarmed; and that he was sure Thor would not compel him to fight without weapons. But, in three days, he would be ready to fight at Griattunagard, on the border of his domain. Thor did not wish to fight a guest, or an unarmed foe; but he accepted Hrungnir's challenge; and the giant went away as soon as possible.

III. THE FIGHT

Hrungnir rode home as fast as Gullfaxi could carry him. He was known, among his brother giants, as their best fighter; and they knew to what danger he was exposed. They had heard that Thor intended to bring his servant, Thialfi, with him; and they were anxious that Hrungnir should have an assistant too; but they could not find one whom they thought suitable. So they made a servant of clay for Hrungnir. He was nine miles high and three miles wide across his chest. He seemed very firm and bold; but there was, in his breast, a very soft, trembling heart. Hrungnir had a heart of flint. Hrungnir's head and club were made of flint also.

On the day appointed for the fight, Hrungnir and his great clay squire were ready at Griattuna-

gard. At the exact hour a black cloud came up; and Thor stepped out, amid the flashing of lightning and the rolling of thunder. Thialfi ran on before, to say that Thor would make the attack from the ground, and that the giant's shield would do him better service under his feet than before his face.

Hrungnir placed his shield under his feet, and seized his club in both hands. At the same time, Thor swung his hammer; and the two weapons met with a fearful crash. The hammer shivered the club, and struck the stone head of the giant, with such force as to fell him to the ground. A splinter from the club was embedded in Thor's forehead, and caused him to fall in such a way that the leg of the dead giant lay across his neck.

Thialfi, who had been breaking up the clay servant with a spade, came to help his master. He could not move the giant's leg. Then the gods, who had come to see the fight, tried to help Thor out of his trouble; but the giant's leg was too heavy for them. Thor's little son, Magni, now ran up, exclaiming, "What a pity I did not come sooner!" and picked up the heavy leg. Thor rose at once, and gave Magni the giant's horse, Gullfaxi.

They went back to Asgard, much pleased with the adventure, although the stone splinter still stuck in Thor's forehead, and caused him much pain.

IV. THE ENCHANTRESS GROA

Thor went home to pretty Sif and kind-hearted Thrud, who did their best to help him out of his trouble. They worked a long time, but could not move the flint. At last Thrud remembered that the enchantress, Groa, was famous for her healing power, and for her skill in medicine. Thrud ran to ask Groa's aid; Groa came at once, and began to chant magic runes.

The stone splinter was becoming loose; and Thrud was about to pluck it out, when Thor, relieved from pain, thought how he could reward his benefactress. Before she had finished chanting her runes, he began to tell her how he had found her little son, Orvandil, in the house of a frost giant.

Groa was delighted beyond measure at the unexpected news. Her son had been stolen, six months before; and she feared she should never see him again. She stopped the chant, to ask when Orvandil would be home; who had stolen him; whether he was well; and a thousand other questions about her only son.

Thor said that the frost giant had hidden him in his castle; but Orvandil had made his way to the iron chariot; and he himself had covered him in a

basket, and carried him across the icy rivers. Orvandil had no shoes; and one of his toes had stuck through the basket, and had frozen. In passing a great block of ice, the toe was broken off. Thor picked it up, and tossed it over the clouds into the sky, where it became a star; and the Norsemen still call it "Orvandil's Toe."

Happy Groa had forgotten where she was in the magic runes, and could not find the place. The flint had become fast again, and she could not loosen it. So Thor always carried a splinter of flint in his forehead.

Norsemen still say that one must not throw a flint stone across a floor, because it jars the piece of flint in Thor's forehead.

THOR AND GEIRROD

I. LOKI AT GEIRROD'S CASTLE

Loki once borrowed Frigga's falcon dress, and flew to Jotunheim. He lighted on a turret of the mountain giant, Geirrod's, castle. Geirrod saw him through an opening in the wall, and ordered a servant to catch him. The servant climbed the castle wall with great difficulty, and caught at the falcon's feet. The awkward movements of the clumsy fellow amused Loki; and the graceful bird teased him by keeping just beyond his reach. At last the falcon, trusting to his agility, hovered too near; the sudden spreading of his wings was to no purpose; for one of his feet was fast in the grasp of the servant, who took him to his master.

As soon as Geirrod saw the bright eyes of the captive, he suspected that he held, not a bird, but a god in disguise. He questioned the bird, but could get no answer. He shut him up in a chest for three months without food. Then the starving Loki was obliged to tell who he was.

" I will spare your life," said Geirrod, " if you will promise to bring Thor to my castle without his hammer, belt of strength, or iron gloves."

Loki promised and was set free.

II. LOKI AND THOR

On his arrival at Asgard, Loki went at once to Thor's palace.

" Where have you been so long ? " asked Thor, after the first greetings.

" I have been at the castle of the mountain giant, Geirrod," said Loki, " and have had a delightful visit. Geirrod is a most hospitable giant, and a charming host. He is anxious to entertain you also, and asked me to come back with you."

Thor had not taken any summer outing. He had worked hard to subdue the frost giants, so that the farmers could cultivate their land ; and he felt the need of a little recreation. So he left his hammer and belt and gloves with Sif, while he went with Loki to make a friendly visit.

On the way, they stopped to see the giantess, Grid. When she found where they were going, and that Thor was wholly unarmed, she insisted on his taking her belt of strength, her iron gloves, and her staff.

III. GEIRROD'S WELCOME TO THOR

After leaving Grid's house, they came to the great river, Vimur. Thor buckled on the belt of strength, and grasped the staff firmly, before he stepped into the river; for the water was deep and the current swift. Loki said he had never seen the water so high. As he spoke, a wave swept over his head; and Thialfi lost his footing. They both clung to Thor's belt; and he advanced cautiously into the stream. The water rushed and roared about them, and dashed over Thor's shoulders.

The river was evidently rising rapidly.

Thor looked up and saw the giantess, Gialp, standing on the bank. He knew that she was repeating runes to cause the river to rise. Loki and Thialfi were almost drowned; and Thor could scarcely keep on his feet.

"The best place to dam a river is at its source," he said, and threw a stone at Gialp. This checked the freshet; and they soon came to the opposite bank. Thor caught hold of a little tree, and pulled himself and his companions out of the water. The little tree was a mountain ash, which has ever since been called "Thor's Salvation." The Northmen still have an adage, "A shrub saved Thor."

When the travelers arrived at Geirrod's castle

they were at once shown into a room which contained but one chair. Thor sat down, and the chair began to rise. He braced Grid's staff against a beam, and pressed down upon the chair. He heard the sound of something breaking, and of some one screaming. When he came down to the floor, he found that Geirrod's two daughters, Gialp and Greip, were hidden under the chair, which they had lifted, hoping to crush his head against the stone beams. He had escaped, but their backs were broken.

Then Geirrod invited Thor into the great hall, to see the games. Fires were burning along the walls, and Geirrod stood before one of the fireplaces. As Thor came up to him, he drew a red-hot wedge from the coals and threw it at Thor, who caught it in his iron gloves. Geirrod ran behind a pillar. Thor threw the wedge with such force that it went through the pillar and the wall beyond, and buried itself in the ground outside. Geirrod fell helpless to the floor, and became a mass of stone, which Thor set up as a monument of his victory over the mountain giant.

THE LAST APPEARANCE OF THOR

King Olaf, the Saint, wished to convert his subjects to Christianity. He often sailed from port to port, to found churches, and to establish courts of justice. On one of these journeys, a dignified and stately stranger came on board the king's ship. The courtiers, who engaged him in conversation, were surprised at the clearness and depth of his remarks. They brought him to the king, who was equally surprised and very much pleased.

As they were sailing along the western coast of Norway, the stranger looked sadly upon the quiet fjords, the wooded mountains, and the fertile valleys stretching away in the distance. At last, he said: "Yes, King Olaf, it is beautiful, with the sun shining on it. It is all green and fruitful, a fair home for you; and many a sore day had Thor, many a wild fight with the mountain giants, before he could make it so. And now you want to put away Thor. King Olaf, have a care!"

And the handsome red-bearded stranger was seen no more.

THE BROKEN PROMISE

When the gods were building their palaces, they were troubled by the fear that the giants would break through the walls of Asgard and destroy their homes. Just as they were finishing Valhalla, a man offered to build them a fortress strong enough to resist all the attacks of the giants. He said that it would require three and a half years for its completion. The gods thought that too long to wait, and the man said he could finish it in one winter, if he could have the help of his horse, Svadilfari. The gods assented to this; and asked what price they must pay. The man said, "The sun and moon and the goddess Freya."

The gods hesitated, but finally consented, on condition that all compensation should be forfeited if the work were not done by the first day of summer, or if the builder should receive any help except such as his horse could give him. The contract was made in the presence of witnesses, and confirmed by oaths.

The man began to work the first day of winter. His horse drew, during the night, as much stone as

could be laid the following day. The very great size and weight of the stones surprised the gods, and they knew that the horse was doing the larger share of the work; but by the terms of the agreement, they could not object to any help that might be given by the wonderful animal.

Three days before the beginning of summer the fortress was all finished except the gateway. The gods knew that, with Svadilfari's help, the stones would all be in place in one more day; and then the terrible price must be paid.

Distressed at the thought of losing Freya, and frightened at the prospect of living in total darkness, they called a council in their hall of justice, to find out who had advised such a foolish bargain. All agreed that it must have been Loki, who was seized at once and threatened with instant death, unless he could find some way to save Freya.

That night, he went into the forest, which the builder had to pass on his way to the quarry to get stone. Loki frightened the horse and made him run away. The man went in pursuit, and spent the whole night in the forest; but he could not find the horse. When morning came, he knew that he could not finish the fortress before the end of winter. So he resumed his natural size. The gods recognized him as a mountain giant. They sent for Thor, who

said he would pay the workman, because he thought the gods were under no obligation to keep a promise given to a giant. He raised his hammer and crushed the giant's head.

Odin knew that an oath was sacred; that a promise must be kept, even if given to an enemy; that, through this act of treachery, untold mischief would come to him, and to all the gods; and that the coming of the Twilight of the Gods would be hastened. But he allowed the gods to save Freya and the sun and moon, at the expense of a broken promise, the murder of a giant, and their own destruction.

GEIRROD AND AGNAR

I. THE LITTLE PRINCES

Odin and Frigga from their lofty seat often looked down into the palace of a certain king. They came to be very fond of the two little sons of this king.

One day the little princes went out in a boat to fish. A storm came up suddenly. Their boat drifted out to sea. It was thrown by the waves on an island, where an old couple lived in a cottage. The old people, who were Odin and Frigga in disguise, took the princes home and cared for them.

They were very kind to both children; but the elder, Geirrod, was Odin's favorite; while the younger, Agnar, appealed to Frigga's motherly heart. They lived contentedly with their friends during the cold, dark winter. But when the long, bright days of spring came, and the sea grew calm, and the skies were blue, they longed for their father and mother and the playmates in their distant home. So Odin gave them a boat, and sent them away under favorable winds.

They made the voyage quickly; but, when the boat touched the shore of their native land, Geirrod leaped out; and, pushing the boat back into the water, left Agnar to the mercy of the waves. Geirrod hastened to his father's house, where he was welcomed as one brought back from the dead. But little Agnar drifted away to the land of the giants.

He fell into the hands of good giants, who gave him a home, where he lived many years. When he became a man, he married a young giantess, and settled down to stay with his benefactors. But, after a time, he longed to see his own people. So he built a boat, and sailed away over the sea.

He found his native land; but the king, his father, was dead; and his brother, Geirrod, was king instead. Geirrod received his brother as a subject, and made him a servant in his father's palace.

II. THE SELFISH KING

Frigga had been watching the two princes all the time. She saw how unjust and cruel Geirrod was to his younger brother. Odin knew only of Geirrod's success, and admired him as a great king.

One day, when Odin and Frigga were sitting on

their lofty seat, looking out over the world, Odin said, "See what a mighty king Geirrod has become, while your little pet, Agnar, is nothing but the little husband of a giantess."

"True," said Frigga, "but Geirrod, with all his grandeur, is mean and selfish. He is even guilty of inhospitality, an offense most shameful in a Norseman. But Agnar, in his poverty, is still kind and generous."

Odin said he would test Geirrod's hospitality. He put on his cloud cloak and broad-brimmed hat, and set out to visit Geirrod. In the meantime, Frigga sent word to Geirrod that he must be watchful, because a wicked enchanter was approaching his palace.

When Odin arrived, he gave his name as Grimnir, and refused to tell who he was or whence he came. Thinking that the old man must be the wicked enchanter, Geirrod ordered his servants to bind him and place him between two fires that were burning on the floor of his great hall. The fires scorched the old man's face, but did not burn his garments. There he stayed eight days and nights, in silence and without food. He would have had nothing to drink, but for Agnar, who secretly brought him a drinking horn containing a refreshing draught.

III. AGNAR'S REWARD

At the close of the eighth day, Geirrod was seated on his throne, enjoying the sight of his guest's sufferings, when the old man began to sing. The song was faint at first, but grew louder and louder, until the chains dropped away, the fires went out, and the feeble old man stood up in the beauty and strength of a god. In his song, Odin told how the king, who had been so blessed by the gods, should fall by his own sword.

Geirrod was about to slay the unwelcome guest; but, as he rose from his seat, his foot slipped, and he fell on his sword, as had just been foretold.

Odin placed Agnar on the throne, and blessed him with great wealth and happiness.

THE BEGINNING OF POETRY

I. KVASIR

THE gods once had a great dispute with the vanas, the spirits of the sea and air. When peace was made, the gods created a wonderful being in honor of the event. They called him Kvasir.

Kvasir was very wise, almost as wise as Odin himself. He spent his time walking up and down the earth, answering the questions of men. He taught new and useful things. Men loved him because he was so good and kind.

The dwarfs were jealous of him, and sought to destroy him. One day two dwarfs, Fialar and Galar, came upon him as he lay asleep in the forest, and killed him. They found his charm and saved it. It was a liquid, which they mixed with honey, to make a kind of mead. They kept it in three vessels: the kettle Odhœrir (inspiration), the bowl Son (expiation), and the cup Boden (offering). They knew that whoever tasted this magic mead would instantly become a poet, a sweet singer, or an orator. Still, none of the dwarfs ever touched the mead. They kept it hidden in a secret place.

One day the dwarfs found the giant, Gilling, asleep on a steep bank. They shoved him off into the water, and he was drowned. Then the wicked dwarfs rolled a millstone upon the roof of Gilling's house. Some of them went into the house and told the giantess that her husband was dead. Frantic with grief, she rushed out to find his body. Just as she left the door, the other dwarfs rolled the stone down upon her head, and crushed her.

The cruel dwarfs thought themselves safe, because Gilling had no children to avenge his death. But he had a brother, Suttung, who caught them, and placed them on a shoal, where the tide would be sure to carry them out to sea. They begged for their lives, but he was deaf to their entreaties, until they promised to give him their precious mead. Then he took them back to the shore, and they brought him the kettle Odhœrir, the bowl Son, and the cup Boden. He gave them to his daughter, Gunlod, at the same time forbidding her to give a taste to either gods or men.

Gunlod watched over her charge day and night. To guard it more securely, she carried it into a cave within a mountain. Even Odin would hardly have known where it was, but for his ever-watchful ravens, Hugin and Munin, who flew back to Asgard

with the news as soon as Gunlod had found a place for her treasure.

II. ODIN WORKS ON A FARM

Odin was very wise, because, ages before, he had exchanged one of his eyes for a drink from Mimir's well at the foot of the great world tree, Yggdrasil. He had also hung nine days and nine nights from the boughs of Yggdrasil, for the sake of mastering the magic runes. But he was not a poet, and he could not sing. He could not rest until he had tasted the mead of the dwarfs. He put on his cloud cloak and his broad-brimmed hat, and set out for the land of the giants.

On the way to the house of Suttung, he passed a meadow where nine thralls were mowing. Their scythes were very dull. He drew a whetstone from the folds of his cloak and offered to sharpen them. The thralls gladly accepted his service. He did the work so quickly and so well that they asked to be allowed to keep the whetstone. Odin tossed it up in the air toward them. In the scramble that followed, the thralls became entangled in their scythes in such a way that each one cut off his neighbor's head. Odin, not at all disturbed, went quietly on his way.

He soon came to the house of Baugi, a brother

of Suttung. Baugi received him very kindly. During their conversation, the giant said he did not know how he was going to finish haying, because all his thralls had been killed.

Odin at once offered to do the work of the nine thralls, if, at the end of the season, Baugi would get for him one draught of Suttung's mead. This, Baugi agreed to do; and Odin, who had given his name as Bolwerk, went to work. The hay was secured, the grain harvested, and all the summer work of the farm finished before the fall rains set in.

When the first days of winter came, Bolwerk went to his master to ask for the prompt payment of his wages. Baugi said he dared not ask his brother for the mead, but he would try to get a few drops of it as he had promised.

III. GUNLOD'S TREASURE

Odin and Baugi went together to the mountain where Gunlod was hidden. They could find no entrance to her cave. Odin gave Baugi his auger, Roti, and told him to bore a hole, through which they could creep into the mountain.

Baugi worked for a few minutes, and said he had bored the hole. Odin, suspecting treachery, blew into the hole. Dust and chips flew back into his

face, so that he knew the hole did not reach clear through the rock. He told Baugi to bore again. When he blew into the hole a second time, no dust came back; and he knew an opening had been made into the cave. He took the form of a worm and crawled through the hole. Treacherous Baugi thrust the auger in after him, hoping to crush him, but he had come out on the other side.

Odin at once resumed his own form, and asked Gunlod for a sip of the mead. Three days and three nights he begged, but Gunlod refused.

At last, she brought out the three vessels, and told him he might take a little from each. But Odin managed to get every drop of the precious mead. Then he became an eagle, and flew away over the mountain tops toward Asgard. His flight was slow, on account of the weight of the mead. He was still a long way from Asgard, when he found that he was pursued. Suttung had also put on eagle's plumage, and was fast overtaking him. But Odin strained every muscle, and reached the wall a little in advance of Suttung.

The gods had seen the race, and had gathered a pile of chips and shavings, which they set on fire, just as Suttung flew over the wall. The flames rose high in the air, and burned the wings of Suttung, who fell into the fire and was destroyed.

Odin flew to the urn, which had been prepared to receive the mead, and poured it out with such haste, that a few drops fell on the earth. Men found it, and as many as possible tasted it. All who tasted were known as rhymesters and poetasters.

The gods carefully preserved the mead; and sometimes, at long intervals, they gave a little to some favored man, whom they wished to become famous for poetry or eloquence.

But Odin sipped only a little of the mead. Most of it was kept for his son, Bragi, who was born about this time. Bragi became the god of poetry and music. The gods gave him a magic golden harp, and put him into a ship, and let him sail over the ocean.

As the ship floated along, Bragi took the harp, and sang the Song of Life, the sound of which rose to Asgard, and fell to the abode of Hela. As he played and sang, the ship glided over the water, and touched the shore. The young god walked through the forest, playing and singing as he went. The trees budded and blossomed, and flowers sprang up in the grass along his path, within the sound of the music.

In the forest he met Iduna, the daughter of Ivald, the dwarf. Iduna became Bragi's wife and the goddess of flowers and of immortal youth.

GANGRAD AND VAFTHRUDNIR

I. ODIN VISITS THE WISE GIANT

VAFTHRUDNIR was the wisest of the giants. The gods had heard of his great wisdom, and Odin wished to visit him. Frigga did not approve of the visit; but Odin reminded her of the advantages he had gained from his many perilous adventures; and she, though still unwilling, consented.

"I wish you a prosperous journey and safe return, dear Odin," she said. "But be careful, when you come into the presence of this giant. He is strong and cruel, as well as wise; and you will need to have all your wits at your command. I consider him, because of his wisdom, the most powerful of the giants."

Odin mounted his horse, Sleipnir, and rode away to Jotunheim. When he arrived at the giant's house, he gave his name as Gangrad, and said he had come to see whether Vafthrudnir were as wise as he had been reported.

Gangrad looked like a traveler from Midgard; and Vafthrudnir, who was angry at the presumption

of the man, said, "If you are not wiser than I, you shall not leave this hall alive."

When Vafthrudnir had asked a few questions, he was satisfied from the answers he received that his visitor was a man of uncommon wisdom. Then he asked the stranger to be seated while they conversed. "But," he said, "the one who fails to answer any question asked by the other, shall forfeit his head."

Gangrad assented to this condition, and they began to talk.

"What are the names of the horses that draw the chariots of Night and Day across the sky?" asked Vafthrudnir.

"Hrimfaxi and Skinfaxi," answered Gangrad.

"What river separates Jotunheim from Asgard?"

"Ifing," replied Gangrad, without hesitation; "and ice has never formed, and will never form, on that river."

"On what plain will the last battle be fought?"

"On the plain of Vigrid," said Gangrad, "which measures a hundred miles on every side."

Then it was Gangrad's turn. "Tell me about the beginning of all things," he began.

II. THE CREATION

"In the beginning," said the giant, "there was a great space between the two worlds, Niflheim, the

world of mist and frost, and Muspelheim, the world of fire. In Niflheim, was a spring called Hvergelmir. From this spring flowed twelve ice-cold rivers, which we know as the rivers Elivagar. These rivers carried with them venom from the spring. After a time the venom hardened like dross from a furnace, and became ice. So a layer of ice was formed. The vapor from the rivers settled upon it, and made frost. As the rivers flowed constantly, many layers of frozen vapor were heaped up in the space called Ginnungagap on the side toward Niflheim, the north side. From Niflheim came mists and fogs and freezing winds.

"From Muspelheim came sparks of fire and hot winds. Muspelheim was hot and bright. Surt, the fire king, sat on a blazing throne and held a flaming sword in his right hand.

"When the hot winds met the frozen vapor, drops of moisture were formed; and, 'by the might of him who sent the heat,' whom neither giants nor gods dare name, these drops were quickened into life, and formed into the shape of a man. He was the first of the race of giants. The gods call him Ymir, but the giants call him Aurgelmir."

"On what did Ymir live?" asked Gangrad.

"The cow, Adhumbla, was made from the frost that had been softened into drops," said

Vafthrudnir; "and Ymir was nourished by her milk."

"What supported the cow?" asked Gangrad.

"She licked the salt from the frost stones," said Vafthrudnir. "The first day a man's hair appeared in the place from which she had licked the salt. The second day a man's head came out from the rocks. The third day the whole man was there. His name was Buri. He was a giant also. He had a son named Bor; and Bor was the father of Odin, Veli, and Vi, the rulers of heaven and earth. The greatest of the three is Odin."

III. THE DELUGE

"Odin, Veli, and Vi," continued Vafthrudnir, "killed the frost giant, Ymir, who had been made from drops of softened frost. When Ymir fell, so much blood gushed from his wounds that all his sons were drowned except Bergelmir, who, with his wife, escaped in a boat.

"The three brothers, Odin, Veli, and Vi, dragged Ymir's body into the middle of Ginnungagap, and made the earth. They made the seas and the rivers from his blood; the land from his flesh; the mountains from his bones; the forests from his hair; the stones and pebbles from his

teeth and from fragments of broken bones. They set up his eyebrows round the edge of the land to keep away what they called the turbulent giants. Dwarfs sprung from the ground. The brothers caught four of them, and placed them at the four corners of the earth. Their names were East, West, North, and South. Upon their backs rested the sky, made from Ymir's skull. The clouds, floating in the sky, were made from Ymir's brain. The stars were made from sparks that fell out from Muspelheim."

IV. THE SUN AND MOON

"Very good," said Gangrad. "Now tell me about the sun and moon."

"The sun and moon," said Vafthrudnir, "were made from the largest and brightest sparks that came from Muspelheim. They were placed in beautiful golden chariots; but there was no one to guide their course across the sky.

"One of the sons of men, Mundelfari, had two children, who were so beautiful that their father called the girl Sol, and the boy Maani. This displeased the gods; and they took the children away to drive the chariots of the sun and moon. The chariot of the sun is drawn by two fine horses, Arvak and Alsvin. The gods placed skins, filled

with cool air, under their withers to refresh them; and a shield stands before Sol to protect the earth from the intense heat.

"Maani guides the course of the moon. His horse is called Alsvidar. Both Sol and Maani are pursued by hungry wolves, and both drive furiously to keep out of their reach."

"What are the wolves, and whence do they come?" asked Gangrad.

"They are the sons of a giantess, who lives in a wood, east of Midgard. She is the mother of many sons, who are all shaped like wolves. The two that chase the sun and the moon are called Skol and Hati. Sometimes they overtake the chariots. Then there is an eclipse, but men make such a clamor, that the wolves are frightened away, before they can do any harm. However, Maani will be swallowed by the great wolf Maanegarm, before the coming of Ragnarok, or the Twilight of the Gods."

"Do Sol and Maani never wish for companions of their own race?" asked Gangrad.

"Yes," said Vafthrudnir, "and Maani has two children from earth in his chariot. Their names are Bil and Hjuki. Their father's name was Vadfin. He sent them to the spring, Byrger, for water one moonlight night. They were bringing the water in a bucket, hung on a pole. Maani saw them, and

beckoned to them. They followed, and he took them away in his chariot. They can be seen distinctly when the moon is full. They still have their pole and bucket."

V. NIGHT AND DAY

"How do you account for night and day?" asked Gangrad.

"A giant named Norvi," said Vafthrudnir, "had a daughter called Nott. She had a very dark complexion; but she married fair Delling, who was related to the gods. Their son, Day, was light like his father. The All-father gave the mother and son, each, a horse and chariot, and bade them drive round the world every twenty-four hours. Nott, or Night, goes first. Her horse, Hrimfaxi, bedews the earth with flecks of foam, that fall from his bit. Day follows; and all things, in earth and sky, sparkle with reflections from Skinfaxi's shining mane."

"You have spoken of men," said Gangrad, "but you have not told how man came to be on the earth."

"One day," said Vafthrudnir, "Odin and his two brothers, Hœnir and Lodir — Lodir is now known as Loki — were walking on the seashore. They found two trees called Ask and Embla. From these

trees they made a man and a woman. Odin gave them life and spirit. Hœnir endowed them with reason and the power of motion. Lodir gave them sight, hearing, blood, and a fair complexion. The gods gave them Midgard for their home."

VI. VALHALLA

"What beings live in Valhalla?" asked Gangrad.

"The heroes who were slain in battle," answered the giant.

"How do they reach Odin's halls, and how do they spend their time?" asked the humble traveler.

"They are brought by the Valkyries, the handmaidens of Odin, who go to the battle fields for him, to decide the victory and to choose, from the slain, those who shall go to Valhalla. All brave warriors who are killed in battle are taken either to Odin's great hall or to Freya's palace. Those who go to Valhalla are occupied with feasting and fighting. They are fed from mead made from the milk of the goat, Heidrun, and with the flesh of the boar, Sæhrimnir. The meat is prepared every morning by the cook, Audhrimnir, in the kettle, Eldhrimnir; and the boar, Sæhrimnir, is whole again every evening.

"Every morning, the heroes mount their steeds, and ride to battle. They fight with swords and

spears; but, at sunset, their wounds are healed, and they ride back to Valhalla for their evening feast. Fighting is their duty as well as their amusement; for they must keep in practice, so as to be ready to fight in the last great battle, in the Twilight of the Gods."

VII. VAFTHRUDNIR RECOGNIZES ODIN

"Who are the Norns?" asked Gangrad.

"They are the three maidens who dwell by Urdar Fountain," said Vafthrudnir. "Their names are Urd, Verdandi, and Skuld,— Past, Present, and Future. They decide events in the lives of men, and appoint the time of their deaths."

Gangrad came nearer to the giant, and said softly, "What did the All-father whisper in the ear of his dead son?"

Then Vafthrudnir knew that his guest was not a man, but the All-father himself; because no one had ever heard that word.

By the terms of their agreement, Vafthrudnir's head was forfeited. But there is nothing to show that Odin claimed the forfeit; so we may believe that he was as generous as he was wise, and that he left the giant unharmed when he returned to Asgard.

BALDER

I. BALDER'S DREAM

BALDER was the favorite son of Odin and Frigga. He was greatly beloved by all living creatures; and all nature smiled upon him. He had passed a restless night. When he slept at all, he saw pale Hela beckoning to him from her dark abode. He rose early and went to Fensalir, where his mother, Frigga, was already at work, spinning gold threads to reward the diligence of men who tilled the soil. Frigga was distressed by her son's wan face and listless manner, even before he told her of the dream. Then, full of anxiety, she hastened to Odin, who tried to sooth her fears, saying that nothing would harm Balder, the Good, the Beautiful, the Beloved.

But Odin soon learned, from the frost giants, that Balder was really in danger. Anxious to know the exact truth, he mounted his eight-footed horse, and rode to the dark land of Hela.

In Hela's house, he found benches covered with tapestry and gold, and tables prepared for a feast.

Frigga.

He went on to the grave of Vala, a great prophetess, who had long been dead. He chanted three times the magic words, and traced the runes, that had the power to call back the dead. Suddenly Vala stood before him. He asked for whom Hela was making such preparations. She replied that Hela was expecting Balder, who would soon be sent to her by the hand of his twin brother, Hoder, the blind god of darkness.

Very sorrowful Odin returned to Frigga, with this sad news. He found her spinning as contentedly as ever; for she had been all through the world, and had taken an oath — from all things living, from things without life, from gods, men, animals, diseases, trees, plants, stones, and metals — that they would not hurt Balder. Balder was cheerful again. The gods were no longer fearful. Surprised and delighted, Odin ordered games and a great feast.

II. THE NEW GAME

In response to Odin's invitation, the gods met on the plain of Ida, where the games were usually played. Knowing that all metals had given an oath not to harm Balder, the gods rolled golden balls toward him. It was very amusing to see them stop just before they reached his feet. Soon

they threw blunt weapons, which fell without touching the god. Then they shot arrows, hurled darts and spears, and laughed to see them fall to the ground, just short of the mark.

Frigga, alone, sat spinning at home. She was wondering what was the cause of the merriment, when an old beggar woman limped up to the door. Frigga asked what the gods were doing to make such a noise. The old woman said they were throwing all kinds of missiles at Balder, and that none of them touched him, no matter how well they were aimed.

Happy Frigga laughed outright. "I knew they would not hurt him," she said; "for I have the promise of everything in the world not to harm my son."

"You are indeed a careful mother," said the woman. "Did you leave nothing out?"

"Only one thing," answered Frigga, smiling. "I left nothing out, except"—and here the old woman listened eagerly—"except the mistletoe, that grows on the oak by the gate of Valhalla."

"Surely," replied the old woman, "you had no need to exact an oath from that. It is weak at best, and it thrives and bears fruit only in the winter darkness, when it would be impossible to hurt Balder."

III. THE MISTLETOE

Then the old beggar woman went straight to the gate of Valhalla. She chuckled, threw off her cloak, and Loki appeared. He touched the mistletoe with his staff. He drew a magic circle and repeated magic words. The little mistletoe shot up, as strong and straight as an arrow. Loki tore it from the tree, and made it into a dart. He went back to the plain of Ida.

IV. DEATH OF BALDER

The gods were still hurling missiles at Balder; and shouts of laughter rang out over the plain, as the deadly weapons fell harmless to the ground. Blind Hoder, the god of darkness, Balder's twin brother, stood apart from the rest. Loki approached him, and said: "You do not honor your brother. Why do you not join the game?"

"I have no weapon," answered Hoder; "and, if I had, I could not see to throw it."

Loki said, "Take this, and let me direct your hand"; and he gave him the dart from the mistletoe. Hoder raised his hand. Loki pointed the dart at Balder's breast, and Hoder threw it.

Instead of laughter, there were cries of mourning; for Balder, the Good, the Beautiful, the Beloved, had fallen dead.

V. BALDER'S FUNERAL

Odin was in despair. Frigga alone was hopeful. She hastened to the side of her dead son. "Who will go for me to the land of Hela?" she cried. "He shall ride Odin's horse, Sleipnir, and shall be best beloved of all the gods."

Hermod came forward, and offered to go.

As he mounted Sleipnir, and started on his perilous journey, the precious body of the dead Balder was tenderly raised, and carried to his home, Breidablik. His ship, Hringhorn, was drawn up on shore to be prepared for the funeral pyre. The gods went into the forest, and cut down great pines, the trunks of which were laid on the deck, to receive the body of Balder. They were covered with rich silks and embroideries. Rare flowers and costly perfumes were brought, with gifts of gold and jewels. Every one brought some treasure, to show his love for Balder. When all was ready, the body was borne on the shoulders of his dearest friends, and placed on the funeral pyre. Balder's horse was slain and carried to the deck of the vessel.

Then all the gods came to look once more on the beautiful face of their dead comrade. Nanna, Balder's wife, came last: and when she saw the torch ready to light the pyre, her heart broke, and

she fell down dead at Balder's feet. The gods placed her body beside that of her husband.

Last of all came Odin, and laid the ring, Draupnir, upon the pyre, and whispered in the ear of his son. No one could hear the words he spoke, but the gods thought he named the name of the great unknown God, or perhaps the hope of the resurrection.

Now all was ready, but the ship was so heavy with tokens of love that it could not be moved by the united strength of the gods. Seeing the difficulty, one of the mountain giants said he knew a giantess, named Hyrrokin, who, unaided, could move a mountain. At the request of the gods, he went to ask her assistance.

She came, riding a huge wolf, with serpents for reins. She put her shoulder to the ship. It moved so suddenly, that the earth trembled; and the shock was so great, that the gods could hardly stand, and the rollers under the ship took fire.

Thor stepped upon the ship, to consecrate it with his hammer. The fire leaped up; and, as the ship sailed away, it was wrapped in a sheet of flame. Loving eyes watched it until the last burning timber sank in the ocean.

Balder the Good

VI. HERMOD'S JOURNEY

Nine days and nine nights, Hermod traveled, across the rainbow bridge, down through the land of darkness and cold and ice. The tenth night, he came to the bridge, Giallar. Sleipnir's eight hoofs clattered noisily, and roused the keeper of the bridge.

"Why do you, a living being, ride over the river of death?" she asked. "Five companies of the dead passed yesterday, and made less noise than you."

Hermod asked who had passed over, and found that Balder and Nanna were among the last. He put spurs to his horse, and hurried on. The wall of Hela's domain rose before him. There was a gate; but he could not open it, and his call was not answered. He rode back a little way upon the smooth ice, dismounted, tightened the saddle girth, vaulted into the saddle, gave Sleipnir the rein, and leaped over the wall.

He entered a hall, and found Balder reclining on a couch, and Nanna by his side. Cups of mead stood, untasted, on a table before them. The wreaths of flowers in their hair were withered; and they were silent and dejected. But they were glad to see Hermod, and Balder begged him to take

Nanna back with him; but she said she could not go without her husband. She sent an embroidered carpet back to Frigga, and Balder returned the ring, Draupnir, to Odin. The three talked all night.

In the morning Hermod saw Hela. At first she refused to let Balder go; but, after Hermod had pleaded with her, and told her how the whole world mourned for the god of light, she said that if indeed the whole world mourned, as he had said, gods, men, beasts, birds, and creeping things, trees, plants, stones, and metals, he might go back. But if one thing should be found that did not weep for Balder, he must stay with her.

Hermod rode back to Asgard. Frigga was delighted. Odin and all the gods began to hope; for who would refuse to shed a tear for Balder, whom all things loved? Messengers were sent who returned, saying: " All things weep for Balder." But at last one dark giantess, Throk, sitting at the entrance of a cave, said she should " weep dry tears " for Balder. Nothing could change her decision, and Hela kept Balder and Nanna until the Twilight of the Gods.

LOKI'S PUNISHMENT

I. ÆGIR'S LAST FEAST

After the death of Balder, Ægir, the ruler of the sea, asked the gods of Asgard to dine with him in his coral caves. He thought that a visit to his beautiful home might cheer them in their loneliness, and turn their attention from their terrible loss.

The gods were very sad; for they could not, for a moment, forget Balder, the Beloved; but they thanked Ægir for his kind thoughtfulness, put on their best robes, tried to smile, as they did before Balder died, and drove to Ægir's halls.

The gods were all there except Balder, Thor, and Loki. They were seated around the festal board, and had just tasted the mead brewed in the great kettle, which Thor had taken from Hymir, when Loki appeared in the doorway. Loki was out of humor because he had been left behind; he scolded the gods, and made sport of them. He laughed at Frey because he had given away his magic sword, and at Tyr because he had lost his right hand; and

he was beginning to say hateful things to Sif, when Thor suddenly stood before him, and shook Mjolnir in his face. Loki ran away to the mountains.

II. LOKI'S NET

He knew the gods would be sure to find him. He built a house with four doors which always stood open, so that he could easily escape if they should come from any direction. He intended to throw himself into a mountain stream that flowed by the house, and change himself into a salmon when he saw them coming. He knew that he was wise enough to avoid a hook, if they fished for him, but feared a net. He knew that no one had a net except Ran, the wife of Ægir; and that she would not lend it. But he feared that somebody would make another net. He tried to make one himself, just to see whether it could be done. He was working on the net, when he was surprised by the arrival of three gods. He threw the net into the fire, and leaped into the water. He became a salmon, and lay between two stones.

One of the gods found the half-burned net in the fireplace. He guessed at once what it was, and what had become of Loki. "Let us make a net like this," he said, "and drag the river."

The net was soon finished. They drew it through the water, but it did not touch the bottom, and Loki lay still between the stones. Then they put weights into the net to make it drag upon the river bed; but Loki jumped over the net.

They tried the third time; and, when he jumped, Thor caught him in his hands. Loki tried to slip through his fingers; but Thor held him fast. Indeed, he came so near getting away that the Northern people say to this day that Thor's grasp gave the salmon its long, slender tail.

III. LOKI IS BOUND

Loki took his own form again, and the gods bound him fast in a rocky cavern. Skadi, the goddess of the mountain stream, placed a serpent directly over his head. The venom from the serpent's mouth fell upon his face. But his faithful wife, Sigyn, left her home in Asgard, and hastened to his side. She caught the poison in a cup, so that no drop touched him, except when she was compelled to turn aside to empty the full cup. Then he suffered such intense agony, that in his struggle to break his fetters, he shook the whole world, and caused men to say that there was an earthquake.

THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

The gods knew they were not to live forever. They knew that after the death of Balder, the sun would give no warmth. So they were not surprised, when the dreadful Fimbul winter came, which lasted three long years.

Then the fire giants came from the south, and the frost giants came from the east. They met on the plains of Vigrid. The bright red cock of Asgard began to crow, and he was answered by the dark red cock of Hela. Heimdal sounded the Giallarhorn from the rainbow bridge; and Odin rode to battle, followed by all his brave warriors.

The Midgard serpent came from the depths of the sea; the chains of Fenris Wolf were broken, and Loki led the forces of evil.

The strength of the gods was sadly impaired by their own mistakes and follies. Odin had but one eye; brave Tyr had but one hand; Frey had lost his conquering sword.

Odin sought out Fenris Wolf, whom he might have slain ages before; and there was a terrible battle. Fenris Wolf rushed upon him with open

Odin on his Lofty Throne.

mouth, which reached from earth to heaven, and swallowed him up. But Odin's son, Vidar, the god of the silent forces of nature, slew the wolf.

Thor killed the Midgard serpent, and the poison of the serpent's breath destroyed Thor.

Surt, king of the fire giants, threw brands of fire upon the earth, and it was burned up.

Then a new earth appeared. Balder and Hoder came back, and all the kindly spirits of nature. Thor's sons, Magni and Modi, were there to give men new strength and courage.

A fair youth and maiden came out of the wood that had grown on the place where Odin, long before, had sought wisdom from Mimir. The new world was fruitful and beautiful, and was the home of a new race of men, who were blessed by the care of the great Unknown God, who had no beginning and would have no end.

VOLSUNG

ODIN's son, Sigi, made his home in Midgard. He was a powerful man, and very fond of the chase. One day he went out to hunt deer, and took with him a thrall named Bredi. At night, when they were ready to go home, it was found that Bredi had killed more deer than Sigi. Sigi was so angry, because he had been outdone by one who was known only as a common laborer, that he killed Bredi, and hid his body in a snowdrift.

Bredi, although a thrall, was a skillful workman whom every one respected; and Sigi, after he had committed this crime, was called a "wolf in holy places," and could no longer live in that country. So Odin gave him warships, and he went to a distant land, where he became king of a great nation. When he was old, he was betrayed and murdered. He had a son named Rerir, who avenged his father's death, and won back his father's throne.

Rerir was a greater king than his father had been. His country was rich and prosperous, his people were contented, and his queen was fair and kind;

but he had no son to sit on his throne. This was a source of great grief to Rerir and his wife.

One day, when he was walking over his fields, he saw three sturdy boys trudging after their father, who was caring for the sheep on the hillside. The sight of the contented shepherd and his happy little sons reminded Rerir of his own lonely home; and he sat down under a tree, and wept.

An apple dropped into his lap. He looked up and recognized Gnaa, one of Frigga's swift messengers. He knew then that his prayers had been heard, and that Frigga had given him the apple as a sign that her storks would soon bring a son to his house. With a thankful heart, he took the apple home to his wife, who rejoiced with him; and, in a short time, there came to them a beautiful baby boy, whom they called Volsung.

Rerir died when Volsung was only a lad; but the nobles and warriors rallied round the young prince, who was already a great leader. His father's kingdom increased under his rule; he married a charming princess, and became the head of the house of the Volsungs. He had ten sons and one daughter. He built a palace, in the center of which grew a mighty oak, called the Branstock. The trunk pierced the roof, and the branches shaded the whole building.

SIGNY

I. THE BETROTHAL

Volsung's daughter, Signy, had many lovers, but she was so happy with her brothers, under the protecting boughs of the Branstock, that she did not wish to leave her father's house. One day an earl came from Siggeir, king of the Goths. He brought presents of gold and jewels, and offered the Volsungs his master's friendship, and aid in battle; but he wanted, in return, the promise that Signy would become his master's wife. Volsung and his sons were pleased at the prospect of an alliance with a great king, and urged Signy to accept this offer. She trembled, and hesitated, because she did not like the earl who had brought the presents and the message, and she dreaded the great king.

Volsung tried to calm her fears, and said, "You will bring honor to our family and kingdom." At last, to please her father, she promised to become Siggeir's wife.

The next day the earl departed, taking with him

gifts of gold from King Volsung; and Signy began to prepare for her wedding.

II. THE WEDDING DAY

On Midsummer eve, Siggeir came to the land of the Volsungs. The wedding guests had assembled beneath the Branstock, and Volsung and his sons went out to meet the bridegroom, who stood by King Volsung, "as the bramble by the oak." The top of his helmet did not reach the shoulder of the smallest of the Volsungs. But they paid him the honor due a great king, and Signy's promised husband.

The next day, Signy sat beside Siggeir at the banquet. She was young and fair; he was old and wrinkled. She was tall and straight; he was short and bent. She was calm and silent; he was the noisiest of the guests. Sigmund, the youngest of Volsung's sons, watched the ill-mated pair, and understood his sister's unhappiness. He longed to send the bridegroom away, but dared not break the Volsung word. Siggeir understood how he was esteemed by this young brother; but the father was blind to everything but the coming glory of the Volsung race.

They were feasting under the Branstock; stories

The Branstock.

had been told about gods and heroes; and an old sea king was playing on a harp of gold, and singing of the lighting of the stars and the creation of the world. All were intent upon the music, when a clap of thunder shook the hall, and a man entered the door. He was very old, and had but one eye; yet his presence was commanding. He wore a broad-brimmed hat of blue, and a cloud-gray cloak. He carried on his shoulder a heavy spear, that glittered in the sunlight. Volsung knew that this man was Odin, King Sigi's father, the ruler of the world. Odin went straight to the Branstock, without speaking a word. He drew a sword from the folds of his cloud cloak, and struck it deep into the heart of the oak. Then he turned and addressed the Goths and the Volsungs.

"There, in the Branstock, is a blade of great worth," he said, "which is my gift to the man who can pluck it out. It will never fail him, so long as his own heart is brave and true." Then he withdrew as quickly and as quietly as he had come in.

III. THE TAKING OF THE SWORD

The wedding guests sat in silence, gazing at the jeweled hilt of the sword, which they knew was intended for the most worthy man among them.

Volsung was first to speak. "Why are you so silent?" he said. "Do you think it an evil omen, that the father of the Volsungs has appeared among us? Do not fear to try the sword."

Siggeir asked to be allowed to try first, because he feared that another might take the sword that was designed for him.

Volsung smiled as he said: "We ask you, as our honored guest, to open the contest. But, in this case, the first has no advantage over the last; for Odin knows to whom the sword will be given."

Siggeir went to the tree, and pulled with all his might at the sword; but, try as he would, he could not loosen it. Flushed with anger, he resumed his seat at Signy's side, and she blushed with shame at the unbecoming conduct of her lord.

Volsung said: "The greatest of all kings comes back empty-handed, and we might suppose that there is small hope for the rest. But each man knows best what he can do. Perhaps to-day an unknown warrior may begin a glorious course, that will lead him beyond the attainments of kings. So let no one fear the trial; but our guests, the earls of Gothland, shall make the first attempt."

The earls of Siggeir tried the sword; but it remained as fast as ever in the heart of the oak. Then came the Volsungs' vassals, shepherds, oars-

men, and soldiers. They could not move the sword; but they went back to their places with shouts of laughter, while Siggeir sat in angry silence.

Then they called on Volsung, who rose from his seat and said that he would put his hand to the hilt, though he liked his own sword best, and he lifted the golden sheath, to show the peace strings as he said: "This was my first sword, and it will go with me to the grave. I shall bear in my hand this blade, unsheathed and without peace strings, when I stand, with the hosts of Odin, at the Twilight of the Gods."

He went to the Branstock, and grasped the hilt of the sword. He pulled long and hard, but he could not move the blade. He again took his place on the high seat, and bade his sons take their turns.

The eldest went first, and the others followed, until nine of Volsung's stalwart sons had failed to draw the sword. Now it was Sigmund's turn; and his brothers smiled to think that a slender stripling should be called to take the sword after warriors had failed. But, at his father's bidding, Sigmund laid his hand upon the hilt. A shout filled the air; for the sword blazed in the hand of the youth, as he waved it over his head. He had drawn it

from the oak, as if it had lain loose in the heart of the Branstock; and he knew that Odin had chosen him to do some glorious deed. But he thought, as he stood with his ruddy cheeks and golden hair shining in the light of the sword, that he might be called to defend the Branstock alone, after his father and brothers had gone to live in Valhalla; and, with downcast eyes, he took his place at his father's side.

IV. SIGGEIR TRIES TO BUY THE SWORD

Sigmund looked up, to find Siggeir smiling upon him; and then the old king spoke flattering words in the ear of the youth. He said: "I am glad of your success; but you do not need this sword. Its coming to you shows that you are already the best of the Volsungs. You need not gild fine gold, or color a red rose; so let me have this sword that came to you on your sister's wedding day."

Then he offered Sigmund gold, silver, amber, and purple from over the seas. But Sigmund refused all the gifts, and kept the sword of Odin. He said:

> Came the sword to thy wedding, Goth king;
>   To thy hand it never came;
> And thence is thine envy whetted,
>   To deal me this word of shame.

Siggeir was very angry; but he smiled, and told Sigmund how much he admired and loved him; and he invited Volsung and all his sons to spend the winter with him in Gothland.

Volsung thanked Siggeir. He said that they would accept his invitation at the end of two months; and asked Siggeir to stay with them until that time.

But Siggeir said that the sea would be too rough for Signy, who must have a smooth and easy voyage; and that he would go the next day, to prepare for their visit.

Sigmund heard these words with a sinking heart; for he read in the face of Signy that she feared the evil of the coming days.

V. THE DEPARTURE OF THE GOTHS

Early in the morning, before any of the household were awake, Signy stole to her father's bedside to beg him not to accept Siggeir's hospitality.

"My child," said Volsung, "my word is given. I must go; but your brothers I will leave behind."

"No, father," said Signy, "if you must come, bring your sons with you, and a great army also."

"I must go as a guest, as I have promised," answered Volsung.

"The decrees of the Norns are hard," Signy

replied; "when I see you again, you will stand in a hopeless battle."

Signy went back to her couch, and Volsung fell asleep. When he awoke, the household was gathering in the hall, to drink the parting cup. Signy, dressed for the voyage, stood by the Branstock, and looked so rosy and happy, that her father could hardly believe that her visit had not been a dream. The horses were brought, and the Volsungs rode with the Goths to the seashore. The ships were already prepared; and Signy kissed her brothers good-by; but she hung upon her father's neck, and whispered in his ear. Siggeir blessed them all; and, drawing Signy into the ship, gave the order to sail.

VI. THE VISIT TO THE GOTHS

When two months had passed, Volsung called his sons together, and told them of Signy's warning, and of her last words when she bade them farewell. He admitted that Siggeir was not the noble man that he had supposed the king of the Goths must be; and that he had faith in the words of Signy, because she had always been wise. "Still," he said, "Signy may have been too anxious, and perhaps her grief, at leaving home, made her suspicious. Perhaps, after all, Siggeir intends to do me honor. I

will go alone; for, if I fall, I shall only go to Odin's halls a little sooner. But you must stay at home, and attend to the wants of the people; for if the sons of Volsung perish, the loss to the world will be great."

But they all said that they would go with him, if he must go. Still Volsung urged that he be allowed to go alone, in the ship of some merchant; but they insisted on going with him, in their own ships. So they sailed together in three ships, and arrived in Gothland, where they found Signy on the shore to meet them.

"How glad I am to see you," she said; "but the time is short for the work you have to do. You remember the warning I gave you? My fears have all proved true; and now Siggeir's men lie in ambush for you. But you still have time to escape; for you have come sooner than you were expected. Turn back, I pray you, and take me with you."

But Volsung kissed her tenderly, and said that he had never turned back from sword or fire, and his sons were as brave as he.

Signy wept, and entreated them to let her stay and share their fate. But Volsung said that she was the wife of a king, and must not shrink from her duty. So she went back; and, that evening, she sat as usual by her husband on his high seat.

The Volsungs landed, the next morning, and took the road that led to Siggeir's dwelling. When they reached the top of the hill, they saw a great army in the valley. They tore the peace strings from their swords, and stood still till Siggeir's men came up.

There was no hope for the Volsungs; but they fought bravely until their father fell; when the brothers, weakened by many wounds, were captured by the enemy.

Siggeir sat on his throne, waiting for tidings from the unequal battle. An earl announced King Volsung's death, and Siggeir asked, "Where are the sons?"

"Fettered in the courtyard," answered the earl; "and it seems to me that it would be a noble deed to break their bonds and send them back to their own country."

"Fool!" said Siggeir, "do you not know the saying: 'Slay the wolf by the house door, lest he slay thee in the wood'?"

VII. THE WOOD LAWN

Signy stood by the door; and as the earl passed out, she hastened to the high seat, and said to the king, "Now, while you are happy in the downfall of my kinsmen, I pray you to grant me one re-

quest: Let a day or two pass, before my brothers go the way of death."

Siggeir answered, "You are not asking a kindness for your kinsmen; but, since you have asked it, a place shall be prepared for them on the wood lawn."

Then he gave orders that Signy should be kept under guard in her chambers, and that her brothers should be chained to heavy logs on the lawn in the wood.

Every morning, he sent a man to see how his prisoners fared; and, every morning, the man returned saying that two of the brothers had been devoured by wild beasts during the night.

At last on a certain day he said, "The beasts have devoured them all."

Siggeir had expected this, and had sent for Signy, to sit with him on his throne. When she heard the dreadful words of the king's messenger, she uttered a piercing shriek, and ran from the king's presence. No one tried to hinder her; for all thought that the last of the Volsungs had perished. She had no need of a guide to the place where her brothers had lain; for the path to the wood had been well worn by the feet of the messenger.

VIII. SIGNY FINDS SIGMUND

When she reached the lawn, she saw a man digging the turf with a piece of wood, which he had torn from a tree.

"Sigmund! Sigmund!" she cried, "speak to me, and tell me what you are doing here!"

Sigmund turned and said, "My sister, Signy, I have looked for you before. But what could one woman do alone? I am weak from wounds and hunger. Come and help me bury our brothers' bones."

Signy did as she was asked, and their work was finished at sunset; but Signy lingered to learn how Sigmund had escaped.

He said that a gray wolf had come to him; that he had seized her with his teeth, and held her; and that, in the struggle, his fetters had broken; and he had killed her with the broken irons. Then he lamented the fall of his father's house, and the prosperity of Siggeir.

But Signy told him that Siggeir would surely suffer for his cruel deeds, and that they both would live to see it. She said that Sigmund would be a great king, and that the time would come, when he would understand the things that now seemed unjust; but he must live, for a time, in the forest;

and she should see him again. Then she kissed him, and went back to the king's palace.

IX. SIGGEIR'S SON

Siggeir thought that he was now the greatest king in the world; for he had Sigmund's sword, his army had taken possession of the land of the Volsungs, and Signy was his obedient handmaid, as well as his wife.

Signy went again to the forest, and found Sigmund living in a cave. When she saw him, she said that she had once more seen a man. She wept, and left him, and took her place in Siggeir's palace. She never wept again. She was as beautiful as ever, and men said that she was unchanged; but her face expressed neither hope nor fear; and, while she never wept, she never laughed.

Sigmund lived alone in his cave, and followed the trade of a smith. Sometimes a hunter saw the light of his forge, and woodmen said that a king of the giants had come to live in the cave that the dwarfs had deserted. One morning, when he was forging a sword, he looked up, and saw a woman standing on the opposite bank of the river, holding a little lad by the hand. The woman returned his greeting and said, "Oh, forest dweller, do us no

harm; for we have come at Signy's command. She says, if this boy proves to be good and brave, he may help you in your work."

She left the child, and disappeared among the trees. Sigmund crossed the river, and bade the boy hold his sword, while he took him on his shoulder, and waded back to his cave. The child did not fear the swift current of the river; but prattled merrily, and asked questions as the dark water rose about them. Sigmund thought him brave enough, but he mistrusted the lad because he had his father's dark hair and eyes.

They had lived together three months, when Sigmund said to the boy, "I am going into the forest to hunt deer, but you must stay here to bake our bread."

At noon Sigmund came home, and asked whether the morning's work were done. The boy did not answer, but was pale and trembling.

"Tell me," said Sigmund, "are you afraid to bake bread?"

"I went to the meal sack," answered the lad, "and something moved in the meal. I thought it was the serpent that we saw last night, and I dared not touch it."

Sigmund laughed and said, "I did not suppose that the son of a king could be scared from his bread by all the serpents in the world."

He opened the meal sack, and took out a gray adder, which he set down in the grass, and said, as he drew his sword from its sheath, "Do you fear this, that men call the serpent of death?"

The boy replied, "I am too young for war, but I shall carry a sword like that before I am many years older."

Sigmund went into the forest and leaned upon his sword for a long time, thinking of Signy's message. When the moon rose, he returned to the cave and called to Siggeir's son, "Come out, and go with me, for I can keep you no longer."

The boy rose at once, and Sigmund led him through the forest, until, at early dawn, they came to the lawn in the wood. "Stay here," said Sigmund, "until the sun has risen, and then go home to your father's palace, and say to your mother, Signy, that Sigmund lives alone, and will not have a foster child."

The lad obeyed Sigmund, and told only his mother what he had seen and heard in the forest, for he was indeed a noble prince, although he was Siggeir's son.

X. SINFIOTLI COMES TO THE FOREST

Ten years passed, and Sigmund still lived alone in the forest, and worked at his forge. One morn-

ing, when he was making a golden helmet, he looked up, and saw a boy standing on the opposite bank of the river. This boy had a broad white brow, and rosy cheeks, and fair hair that looked golden in the sunlight; and he cried out to Sigmund: "You are the master smith of whom my mother told me. I will come to you." And he plunged into the river. The water came up to his chin, but he showed no fear, and struggled with the current until his feet touched the bank near Sigmund.

"Here are the cave and the river, the forge and all the things my mother told me about; but you cannot be the master smith, because my mother said that no one could look upon his face and not tremble with fear, and I feel no fear when I look into your face. I must go on until I find my foster father; but I wish he might be a man like you."

"Stay with me," said Sigmund, "for you have found the foster father to whom your mother sent you. You have looked into the face of Volsung's son, and smiled. Tell me your name and the message that Signy sends."

"My name is Sinfiotli," answered the child; "I am ten years old. My mother, Signy, said only this: that she sends you a man to help you in your

work; and that, whether he be of the kings or of the gods, you will find out in your time of need."

Sigmund looked upon the lad, and said to himself, "Shall I cherish another son of Siggeir?" But the boy looked up with the blue eyes of the Volsungs, and Sigmund took him to his heart.

Sigmund gave his foster son heavy tasks to perform, and sent him on dangerous errands. But Sinfiotli never complained, or showed any sign of fear. When they had lived together a year, Sigmund said: "I am going to get venison for our dinner, but you must stay at home and bake bread, to eat with our meat."

In the evening Sigmund came home with a deer on his shoulder. Sinfiotli went out to meet him, as he always did, and said with a smile, "You have brought the meat, and the bread is ready for our dinner."

"Indeed," said Sigmund, "did you knead the meal that was in yonder sack?"

"I had no other," said the lad; "but there was something strange about it; for, when I took up the bag, something moved within it. It looked like an ashen stick; but it seemed to be alive. I knew we must have bread for our dinner; so I kneaded it all together; and now the squirming thing is baked in the bread."

Sigmund laughed as he answered, "You have kneaded into the bread a deadly adder; so, to-night, do not eat of the bread; for, I fear, harm may come to you." Sigmund could handle venomous serpents, or taste poison in his food, and escape unharmed; but he was afraid to give his sister's son too severe a test.

After this trial of Sinfiotli's courage, Sigmund looked upon him as Signy's son only. He thought no more of Siggeir's treachery, which he had feared might appear in the youth; and he taught him the use of the sword, and the arts of war.

XI. THE WEREWOLVES

On one of their journeys through the forest, Sigmund and Sinfiotli came to a hut, and knocked at the door. No one answered, and they entered, unbidden. The walls of the hut were hung with gold, and two men lay asleep on benches. They wore the dress of the Southern people, and had heavy gold bracelets on their arms. Over the head of each hung a gray wolfskin. Sigmund gazed long at one of the wolfskins, and remembered the words he had spoken, when he lay chained to the log on the wood lawn: that, at the last great battle, the gods would miss a man, and find a wolf instead.

He took down the wolfskin and put it on. Sinfiotli took the other wolfskin and did as his foster father had done. They both became wolves, and ran through the forest, howling and doing wolfish things. The men in the hut were sons of kings, and were the victims of enchantment, which compelled them to rove as wolves, nine days out of ten; and, on the tenth day, when they were allowed to take their own forms, they lay exhausted.

Sigmund and Sinfiotli still had kings' hearts under their wolfish dress; and their kings' hearts told them to go back to their cave, and wait until they could be changed to men again. But their wolfish bodies drove them through the forest to the homes of men, and made them prey upon sheep and other domestic animals. A band of hunters saw them, and attacked them with spears; but, after a short struggle, every man was killed, and the wolves went on their way.

They met a score of traders from over the sea, whom Sinfiotli wanted to attack. But visions of the gold in their cave, and a desire to return to it, floated through Sigmund's dulled brain; and he tried to restrain his companion. But Sinfiotli broke through the thicket, and rushed out at the men; who, raising their axes and drawing their

swords, almost killed the werewolves; though, at the end of the fight, not a man was left.

Sinfiotli lay fainting on the grass, and Sigmund was howling over the slain; when, somehow, the thought of the ruin they had wrought entered his wolfish head; and he turned on Sinfiotli, who had caused their latest trouble, and tore him, as one wolf tears another.

Two weasels came past, and one bit the other, until she fell down dead, and then he seemed to regret his rash act. In an instant, he ran into the thicket, came back with a leaf in his mouth, and laid it on his dead mate. She sprang up perfectly well, and the two happy little creatures ran away together.

Sigmund was wondering where he could find a leaf from the same herb, when a raven flew over his head with one in his beak. He dropped it, and Sigmund picked it up, and laid it on Sinfiotli's wounds, which were healed at once. They were both tired of the wolfskins, and of the work of the witches, so they went home and waited in the cave until the rest of the nine days were past, when they could again take their own forms, and speak in the language of men.

Sinfiotli spoke first, and said: "When I left the palace of kings, I had many lessons to learn. You

have taught me many things, but the gods have taught me more, and, in bringing us to the hut in the wilderness, they have humbled us both, to make us willing to do whatever work comes to our hands. Now how long must I wait, before I shall be able to do some great deed? You are a master; make me a master too."

Sigmund's face was sad, but a strange light shone in his eyes. "This is the great deed that lies before us," he said. "We must slay my father's foe, and what if that foe be your father?" For he did not yet know that Sinfiotli was of the race of the gods. Then he told Sinfiotli of Siggeir's treachery, and said, "Now think well of this: can you endure it, if, all your life, men say, 'He slew his father, and amended wrong with wrong'?"

"What father have I," said Sinfiotli, "except him who saved my life? I remember that Signy is my mother, and, for her sake, I will avenge the wrong."

"The gods have sent you," said Sigmund, "for you neither start nor turn pale, and I dare not refuse what they have put in my hands, to avenge the death of Volsung."

"Strike what blow you will," said Sinfiotli. "Take me as the sword of the gods, and keep your hand on the hilt."

XII. THE DEATH OF SIGGEIR AND SIGNY

One winter afternoon Sigmund and Sinfiotli went to the palace of King Siggeir. Unobserved, they entered the hall at dusk, and hid behind the great wine tuns, near enough to the banquet hall, to see the lights and hear the voices. No one came near them except the cup bearer, who drew wine for the king, and the king's two little children, who were trundling golden hoops about the hall. A ring, from one of their toys, rolled away, and they followed it to Sigmund's feet. They ran out into the hall, crying: "We have seen two men among the wine. We know them by their wide white hats."

The earls from the banquet hall rushed out with drawn swords. But the two men fought bravely, until Sinfiotli slipped and fell, when they were both taken and bound.

The next morning, Siggeir ordered his men to build a double tomb, divided by a stone partition. The two prisoners were cast into these stone chambers; but, before the roof was laid over Sinfiotli's tomb, Signy came and threw a bundle of straw at his feet. The laborers thought she had given him a package of food, which would only prolong the time of his suffering, so they finished their work, and went away.

Sinfiotli cried out, "Best unto babe is mother," for he thought that Signy had thrown him a piece of boar's flesh, wrapped in straw. Then he was silent, and Sigmund asked: "What is the matter? Is there an adder in the meat?"

"Yes," answered Sinfiotli, "the serpent of the Branstock, which Siggeir took from you."

He struck the wall, and the sword point pierced the stone. Sigmund seized it in his hands, and together they sawed down the wall, cut away the rafters, and leaped out. They went to Siggeir's palace, piled wood against the doors, and set it on fire. Siggeir, roused from sleep, thought he was besieged by robbers, and called to ask what price they wanted, whether half of his kingdom or all his treasure. Sigmund answered: "We have not come to rob you; we have gold and purple, and care not for your kingdom or your treasure. We remember our father, Volsung, and our kin. This deed is done by Sigmund, the Volsung, and Sinfiotli, Signy's son."

Then he called to Signy to come out. She came, with her women, but when she had seen her attendants safely sheltered, she bade her brother and son farewell, and went back to her husband in the burning building. The flames reached the roof as she entered the hall, the walls fell in, and the palace of King Siggeir was only a blackened ruin.

KING SIGMUND

I. HELGI

Sigmund gathered an army, and all embarked in ships, to go back to his native land. Sinfiotli was his constant assistant and adviser. When they arrived at the land of the Volsungs, the people received them gladly, and proclaimed Sigmund king.

When he sat once more beneath the Branstock, he thought of Signy, and how she had given herself to save her father's family; and he remembered her wedding day, when he had drawn the sword of Odin from the oak; and how he had thought, that day, that he might be left to defend the Branstock, after his father and brothers had ascended to the halls of Odin.

He married a princess, whose name was Borghild. They had two sons, named Hamond and Helgi. When Helgi lay in the cradle, the Norns entered the room, and blessed the newborn babe. They called him "Sunlit Hill," "Sharp Sword," and "Lord of Rings"; and promised him a glorious career. He was brought up in the house of Hagal, a wise teacher.

At the age of fifteen, he had grown so tall, and had become so brave, that he ventured alone into the house of Hunding, his father's enemy. The family did not recognize the young prince; and he passed through, without exciting much attention. But he left an insolent message, which made Hunding so angry, that he started in pursuit of the bold young fellow. Hunding followed him to Hagal's house, and went in after him; but found no one, except a maid, who was grinding corn. Hunding was surprised that a maid should be so tall, and have such brawny arms; but he did not suspect that she was Helgi, in disguise, as she really was.

After this, Helgi was considered proficient enough, in courage and cunning, to join the army. He marched, with Sinfiotli, against the Hundings, and fought a great battle. The Valkyries were hovering near, waiting to choose the slain for Odin's halls,. when their attention was called to the great courage of Helgi. One of their number, named Gudrun, admired him so much, that she came to him, and offered to be his wife. They were married at once.

After the battle, only one of the Hunding family remained alive; and he was allowed to go free, after he had promised not to avenge the death of his father; but he borrowed Odin's spear, and killed Helgi. Helgi's wife was heartbroken at the death

Gudrun the Valkyrie.

of her husband. She wept constantly, until she learned that, every day, Helgi's voice called to her from his tomb. That night, she entered the tomb, and asked why Helgi called her, and why his wounds still bled. Helgi's voice answered, "I cannot be happy while you weep; and, for every tear you shed, a drop of my blood must flow."

Gudrun wept no more; but Odin soon called her, to cross the rainbow bridge. Helgi had been made leader of the heroes in Valhalla; and Gudrun, again a Valkyr, came to earth, to choose the slain heroes, who should fight under Helgi's command at the last great battle.

II. SINFIOTLI AND GUDROD

After the death of Helgi, Sinfiotli returned to Sigmund's palace, where he was held in high esteem. But he soon became weary of continual feasting and song, and longed for an active life. In the spring, he joined his forces to those of Gudrod, Borghild's brother, and sailed over the sea, to gain new victories.

They conquered a rich nation, and took much spoil. Gudrod was brave in battle, but he had a greedy heart. He wanted to divide the spoil at once; but Sinfiotli said it was not becoming, in two kings of war, to dispute over booty, as pirates

might do; and that he would come back at night, and take what Gudrod thought best to give him. He went to his warship, to rest until evening.

Gudrod worked all day; and, when Sinfiotli returned at night, he found the spoil divided into two parts, and Sinfiotli's share was larger than Gudrod's. But the things of value were all in Gudrod's part. Sinfiotli was indignant; and the men of his command were very angry. Gudrod, seeing this discontent, called on his own men to slay the "wood abider"; but the soldiers stood still, and no sword was unsheathed.

Then Sinfiotli challenged Gudrod to single combat, and they met the next morning. Gudrod fought bravely, but fell mortally wounded.

Sinfiotli returned to the land of the Volsungs, with the army. Sigmund made a feast in his honor, and was listening to the story of the war, when Borghild entered and asked why her brother had not come back from the sea. Sinfiotli answered:

"The white swords met in the island; bright there did the war shields shine,
And there thy brother abideth; for his hand was worser than mine."

Borghild called on Sigmund to drive this "wolf of the kingfolk" out of the land of the Volsungs.

Sigmund answered that, when she had heard the story of the war, she would know that her brother had not kept his word. But, even if he had stood by his agreement, Sinfiotli could not be punished, because Gudrod had perished in a fair fight. Still he said that he would pay gold for her brother's death, because he loved her.

Borghild went to her own apartments, where she lay silent for a long time.

III. THE DEATH OF SINFIOTLI

The next day Borghild went to Sigmund to say that she was no longer angry, and that she would take his gold. She kissed him and Sinfiotli also, and sat down on the high seat. She asked her husband to make a funeral feast for her brother, Gudrod. This he was willing to do, and one autumn evening all the princes and earls assembled in the great hall under the Branstock to do honor to Gudrod's memory. Borghild was there, and pouring wine for Sinfiotli, said, "Drink now of the cup from my hand, and let us bury hate that is dead."

Sinfiotli took the cup, but did not drink.

Sigmund asked why he sat so silent and sorrowful in the midst of the feast.

Sinfiotli said that he saw hate in the cup.

"Give it to me," answered Sigmund, and taking the cup, he drank the wine.

Borghild gave Sinfiotli another cup, which he passed to Sigmund, who drank as before.

When she brought the third cup, she taunted Sinfiotli with cowardice and fear of death. He took the cup from her hand, but did not drink. Sigmund again asked why he took no part in the feast, and he said, "Because there is death in the cup."

The old king did not take the wine this time, and Sinfiotli thought that he wished him to drink it. So he raised it to his lips, and drained the cup, and fell back dead.

Sigmund raised the body of his foster son. His grief was so great that no one dared look upon it, or listen to the words he spoke. He bore the body in his arms out into the darkness. The wind shrieked through the Branstock, and blew black clouds across the face of the moon. Sigmund went away from the dwellings of men to the forest at the foot of the mountains. A wide river stopped his progress. He followed along its bank until he came to the sea. An ancient, one-eyed boatman hailed him, and asked where he was going. He answered that he wished to cross the sea, because the light of his life had gone out.

"I have come," said the boatman, "to convey a great king across the water."

So Sigmund laid the body in the bottom of the boat; but before he could himself step in, the boat and the boatman had vanished. Then he knew that the boatman was Odin, and that he had taken Sinfiotli to the home of the heroes.

IV. THE DEATH OF SIGMUND

Sigmund went back to his father's throne, and attended to the business of the kingdom. He went to war and conquered his enemies; but he cared little for glory, now that Sinfiotli and Helgi were gone. He had sent Borghild away after Sinfiotli's death, and he was left alone in the great house of the Volsungs.

He heard that a distant king had a daughter who was beautiful, good, and wise; and he sent an earl laden with gold and gifts, to ask her to be his queen. The king's name was Eylimi, and his daughter's name was Hiordis.

On the very day of the earl's arrival at Eylimi's court, a messenger came from King Lygni to ask the hand of Hiordis. Lygni's kingdom was near Eylimi's, and Sigmund's was far away. Lygni was young, and Sigmund was old. Both were rich and powerful kings.

Eylimi listened to both messages, but had no word to say. He asked both earls to wait, and while they were entertained in the banquet hall, he sought his daughter and told her of her suitors. She chose the Volsung king.

The old king went out with a sad heart, for he thought that the young king Lygni would make a more suitable husband for Hiordis. But he had said that she should have her way, and he could not change her choice. So he sent rich gifts to Lygni, with the word that his daughter was betrothed to another king; and King Sigmund's earl received the welcome news, that in two months' time his royal master might come for his bride. "But," said Eylimi, "bid him come with sword and ships of war, for I fear that he may be attacked."

But Sigmund remembered his father, and scorned to take an army to a wedding. Still he prepared ten long ships, and filled them with the best of his men. They arrived at Eylimi's kingdom without accident, and received a warm welcome.

White-haired Sigmund and fair Hiordis were greatly pleased with each other, and the wedding feasts were joyful. Eylimi loved Sigmund for his goodness, and admired him for his wisdom and dignity. He no longer feared for the happiness of Hiordis because she had chosen an old king

for her husband. But one day, sails were seen approaching the island. Lygni was angry at the refusal of Hiordis, and said that he would have the princess as well as the gifts. He came, with a fleet and army, on the day that Sigmund and Hiordis had intended to sail for the land of the Volsungs.

Sorrow and dread filled the heart of Eylimi; but Sigmund bade him be of good cheer, for he said that, even if he had not come, Hiordis could never have been persuaded to marry Lygni. He cut the peace strings from his sword, and set his little army in battle array.

It is said that the number of Sigmund's and Eylimi's men was to the hosts of Lygni as the brown pips are to an apple when it is cut through the core. But the little army marched out bravely, and Hiordis, with her maid, followed at a distance.

Sigmund stood like an image of gold, in the front of the battle, with the sword of the Branstock unsheathed. As the hosts of Lygni advanced, it seemed as if the whole world were moving. But the flashing sword of Odin hewed down all that came within its reach, as Sigmund wielded it with more than youthful vigor. He was no longer worn and old; the hope and eagerness of youth had come back in the excitement of the battle, and he said to

himself, "A few more strokes of the sword, and I shall have conquered the world."

But an old, one-eyed man, wearing a broad-brimmed hat and a cloud-gray cloak, made his way across the battle field. He carried a heavy spear, with which he struck the sword of the Branstock, and the sword fell in pieces at Sigmund's feet. The old man vanished; and the advancing army of Lygni struck down Sigmund. His warriors fell like grass before the scythe, and the only ones left standing were Lygni's men.

"Who will now oppose King Lygni's wooing?" cried the king; and he led the way to Eylimi's palace.

When the last warrior had left the battle field, Hiordis came out from the thicket, to look for her husband. She found him wounded, but still alive. He opened his eyes as she bent over him, and she cried out with delight. But he said: "I cannot live; this day my eyes have seen Odin, and I must do his will. Take the pieces of my sword, the sword of the Branstock, and keep them as your choicest treasure. If the gods give you a son, he will be a greater hero than the Volsung race has yet known. Give the broken sword to him when he has grown to manhood, and the new-welded blade will be invincible. Put away your sorrow, for,

even now, I see the light, and hear the music, in the great banquet hall of Odin's heroes."

V. THE BURIAL OF SIGMUND

Hiordis lingered beside her dead until day began to dawn. As she looked toward the sea, she saw a war ship approaching the shore. She returned to the thicket, where her maid was waiting, and told her of the death of Sigmund, and of the ship that she had seen. "Now," she said, "give me your dress of blue, and take my purple and gold. And, when the men ask our names, say that you are Hiordis, the wife of King Volsung, and that I am your handmaid."

When the ship's company landed, they were led by a king, Elf, the son of the Helper. He had just come from war, and had turned his ship toward the island, in the hope of finding water. As they drew near the shore, they saw that there had been a great battle; and they noticed that a woman, dressed like a queen and wearing a gold crown, sat among the slain. She ran into a thicket; and they lost sight of her.

They went directly to the battle field, and at once recognized the body of Sigmund as that of a great king. "Come," said King Elf, "and look upon his face. Few such are left on earth. Then let us

go to the thicket, where the queen is hidden; and learn from her the story of the mighty dead."

They found the women, and greeted them kindly. To their questions, the one in the queen's dress answered: "I am Hiordis, the queen. The slain lord in yonder field was my husband, Sigmund, the Volsung."

"And who is this blue-clad one?" asked King Elf.

"She is my waiting maid, who weeps for her lover, killed in the battle," answered the queen.

The king looked again at the maid's sorrowful face, but said no more. He went, with the women, to the battle field, and built a mound for Sigmund, the Volsung. The walls were made of the broken shields of his foes, and hung with their banners. His sword could not be found; and the maid explained that her royal master had commanded that the pieces of his broken sword be taken by the queen.

After Sigmund's body had been laid in the mound, King Elf asked the women where they would go, since the island was in the hands of Lygni. Hiordis asked that they might go, with him, to his home. The king gladly gave them passage in his war ship; and they sailed to the happy land of King Elf and his father, the Helper.

THE HOUSE OF THE HELPER

I. KING ELF FINDS OUT THE QUEEN

THE Helper and his wife gave their unexpected guests a cordial welcome; and Hiordis was comforted by the kindness of her new friends.

One morning Elf's mother said to her son, "I have observed these women carefully, and I should like to know why the inferior woman is the better dressed."

Elf said, "She is Hiordis, wife of Sigmund, the Volsung."

The old queen laughed aloud, and said: "It is not so, my son. Have you not noticed that the handmaid speaks whenever any matter of importance is to be decided?"

"Yes," he said, "and she is both wise and gracious, and very dear to me."

"Follow my advice," said the wise queen mother, "and, when you have won your queen, see if they do not again change raiment."

One day Elf said to the woman in purple and gold, "How do you know, in the dark winter mornings, when it is time to rise?"

She answered: "When I lived in my father's house, the folks must be astir, whether the fields were light or dark. I rose early to go to the meadows, and drank milk before I left the house; and now I am always thirsty when it is time to rise."

Elf laughed, and said: "That was a strange custom that required a king's daughter to go to the fields before light. And now, fair maid with eyes of gray, how can you tell that morning has come, when the heavens are as dark as midnight?"

She said: "My father gave me this gold ring, which has this strange property: it grows cold upon my finger when day comes. So when my ring grows cold, I know it is time to rise."

Elf laughed again. "Indeed," he said, "there was gold in your father's house. Come now, tell me that you are Hiordis, wife of Sigmund, the Volsung; and I will make you queen of my people."

"Give me a year to mourn for Sigmund, and then I will be your queen," she said.

II. THE BIRTH OF SIGURD, THE VOLSUNG

There was peace in the land of the Helper, and joy in King Elf's home, for a beautiful babe lay in the arms of Hiordis. His eyes were so bright, that the women shrank from their gaze, and so strong,

that they could look at the sun. Hiordis held him close, while she told him the story of Sigmund, and then gave him to the women to show to the kings.

The Helper and his son were sitting on their high seat, when they heard the sound of music, and four women, dressed in white, entered the hall.

"O daughters of earls," said the Helper, "what tidings do you bring?"

The women talked of grief, wonder, fear, and joy, until King Elf grew impatient and cried out, "Yet you come rejoicing; what have you to tell?"

Then they advanced to the high seat; and, drawing away the purple covering, presented the child, and said, "Queen Hiordis sends you this; and she says that he shall be called by the name that you shall give him."

King Elf took the child in his arms, and held him a long time, while he thought of all that Hiordis had told him, of the might of the Volsungs, and the battle by the sea. Then he said, "His name shall be Sigurd, the Volsung," and sprinkled water upon the head of the young prince.

Men heard the name, and echoed it through hall and courtyard and market place. Hiordis heard it in her chamber; and, when the women returned with the baby, before they could speak, she greeted him as Sigurd, the Volsung.

Sigurd grew in beauty and wisdom; and, after a time, his mother Hiordis was married to King Elf. Peace and plenty blessed the land.

III. GREYFELL

Two ancient men lived in the country of the Helper. One was related to the giants, and the other to the dwarfs. Gripir was tall and stately, with hair and beard of snowy white. He knew all things, from the beginning of the world; and he knew many things that were to be.

Regin was beardless, crooked, and short. His face was pinched and wan. He was so old, that no one knew how long he had lived in the land of the Helper. He was skilled in everything except the arts of war. He was eloquent, and men believed every word he spoke. He sang and played the harp most beautifully. He could read the clouds and the winds, and still the sea. He could bind up wounds, and heal the sick. He taught men how to sow and reap; how to spin and weave. He was master of all work in metals. He loved young Sigurd, and asked to be his teacher.

The Helper said: "You taught me, and you taught my son. We know you are the master of masters. Three times man's lifetime would not be

long enough to learn your wisdom. Yet your heart is cold. We love young Sigurd, and would not have you make him grim and ill-tempered."

Regin laughed as he answered, "I taught you cunning by measure; but I shall measure nothing to him; I shall not make him cold-hearted or ill-natured."

So Regin took Sigurd to his house in the forest, where he taught the young prince all things, except the art of war. He taught him to make swords, and all kinds of weapons and armor. He also taught him many languages, how to carve runes, and how to play the harp, and to sing. He taught him the haunts of wild animals, the names and uses of flowers and plants; how to ply the oar and spread the sails on the sea.

One day, as they sat by the forge, Regin told tales of ancient kings and heroes, until Sigurd's heart swelled within him, and his longing to do noble things gave a new light to his eyes.

Regin said, "You will go out into the world, to do greater and braver deeds than your fathers ever did."

But the boy shook his head, and said, "I love the Helper and King Elf; their land is fair and good."

"Yet do as I bid you," said Regin. "Ask for a war horse."

The lad was angry, as he replied: "I have all the horses I need, and everything I want. Why would you have me ask for more?"

"The Volsungs were a noble race," said Regin. "They were not satisfied with good, but demanded the best." Then he took his harp, and sang of the deeds of the heroes and of the rides of the Valkyries, until Sigurd forgot his anger. He left the forge, with the song ringing in his ears; and that night he asked the kings to give him such a horse as he might choose.

"The stables are open to you," answered King Elf.

But Sigurd begged a token for Gripir, who had charge of all the horses; so that he might take the best of the strong and the swift. "But," he added, "if I ask too great a gift, I pray you, forget what I have said."

King Elf smiled, and said: "You will take a long ride. You will see war and sorrow, and death at last; but you will win praise and honor. So have your way, for we can no more hold you than we can hold back the rising sun."

Sigurd thanked the kings; and, early next morning, went to Gripir. The wise old man lived in a house on a mountain crag. Eagles flew about it; and winds from the heart of the mountains blew

through every room. Few men dared step across the threshold. Sigurd entered the hall, and found Gripir seated in a chair made from a sea serpent's tooth. His beard almost swept the sea-green floor. His robe was made of gold, and his staff had a knob of crystal.

Gripir knew Sigurd, and said: "Hail, king with the bright eyes! You need no token, nor need you tell your errand. The wind brought me word that you were coming to choose a war horse from my meadows. Now go, and take the best; but come back when you have your sword."

Sigurd ran down the mountain side, and was on his way to the meadows, when he met a man wearing a broad-brimmed hat, and a cloud-gray cloak. He had but one eye, and he seemed very old. He spoke to Sigurd, and said, "Let me tell you how to choose your horse."

"Are you Gripir's horseherd?" asked Sigurd; and he had begun to ask the old man whether he would take gold for his advice, when he noticed his noble bearing, and said, "Your face is like that of the heroes, my master, Regin, tells me about; and your cloud-gray garment I have seen in my dreams."

"There is one horse in the meadow, better than all the rest," said the stranger; "and if you would have him for your own, follow my directions."

Sigurd said, "What shall I do?"

"Drive all the horses into the river," said the old man; "and wait, to see what happens."

Sigurd drove them into the water; but the current was so strong, that it carried many fine horses out to sea. Some turned and swam back to the bank; others were caught in the eddies and drowned. But one swam across the river, climbed the opposite bank, and galloped over the meadows on the other side. Then he wheeled, leaped into the river, and swam back. He shook the water from his mane, and stood neighing at Sigurd's side.

"Listen, Sigurd," said the old man. "I gave your father a gift which you will yet hold dear; and I now give you this horse. Do not fear to go where he may carry you, for your fathers are now in my house, enjoying the rewards of their valor. Like all your noble race, live so that you will not care when death may come."

Then Sigurd knew that Odin had come to him, and would have asked about many things, but Odin faded away, and only Greyfell stood beside his master on the river bank.

REGIN'S STORY

I. REIDMAR AND HIS SONS

One day when Sigurd was sitting with Regin, the dwarf told stories of kings who had won their crowns by many hard-fought battles. At last he said: "You are Sigmund's son; will you wait till these peaceful kings of this little kingdom are dead, and then will you serve their sons? Will you spend your life in idle waiting for the time when their war banners shall float in the breeze?"

Sigurd answered: "You taunt me too much. I love these peaceful kings; their land is good. Perhaps the time may come when I shall be called to do some daring deed. When the call is heard, and the deed is ready, the man will not be wanting."

Regin replied: "The deed is ready, but you love this land, and why should he who can feast be content to eat rye bread? They say that you are Sigmund's son, but you need not be a warrior, for Sigmund lies quiet in his mound by the sea."

Sigurd's eyes flashed as he said, "Mock not the son of Sigmund, but tell the deed that waits."

The cunning master answered, "The deed is the righting of wrong, and the winning of great treasure."

Sigurd asked: "How long have you known of this? And what is the treasure to you?"

"I have known of the wrong," said Regin, "for hundreds of years. And the treasure is mine, but it is beyond my reach; for I know nothing of the art of war. I came to this land to seek a hero to undo the wrong, and bring back my treasure; but generations passed, and the end seemed no nearer, until I saw your eyes in the cradle."

Sigurd was silent, but at last he said: "I will do the deed, and you shall have your treasure, and the curse also (if a curse rests upon the gold); but I will surely do the deed. Tell me where the treasure lies."

Regin answered, "I must first tell you the story of my life; so keep your seat and listen to a tale of things that happened before kings were born.

"I belong to the race of the dwarfs. We knew no right nor wrong; we had no love; we made and unmade, and felt no sorrow. We were wise and powerful, and our day is not wholly past. Trust not your life in my hands when I dream of my kindred, and when I seem most like the dwarfs of long ago.

"After a time the gods came among us, and we learned to love, and hope, and fear. We lived in the depths of the earth, and learned to work in metals. We knew of poisons and medicines; we made the spear and bow; we built ships to sail on the sea.

"Reidmar was my father. He was old and wise. To my brother, Fafnir, he gave a soul that knew no fear, a brow like hardened iron, a hand that never failed, an ear that could not listen to a sorrowful tale, and a heart as greedy as a king's. To my brother, Otter, he gave a snare and a longing to search the forests and streams until nothing was left alive. To me, the youngest, he gave memory of the past, fear of the future, a hammer, an anvil, and coals of fire burning in the forge.

"Now we were but little better than men; but we still had the power to change our shape, and appear in whatever form we would. Fafnir went abroad and became the terror of the world. Otter lived with the animals that he hunted, and so often took their forms, that he seemed to be the king of the forest. I toiled to build my father's house, and, as the walls rose bright with gold, my hands became soiled and misshapen, and I looked upon the sun and the wind and all things in nature, as only the tools of my smithy.

II. THE THREE TRAVELERS

"After a time, three travelers came from Asgard to look over their work. They were Odin, Hœnir, and Loki. They passed through a forest and came to a river where they found an otter eating a fish. Loki picked up a stone and threw it at the otter, which fell dead. Loki took both the otter and the fish and went on with his companions. They soon came to a house at the foot of a mountain. They were tired and hungry, and, as the sun was setting, Odin said to his brothers, 'Let us seek shelter for the night in this house.'

"They found the master of the house seated in a golden hall, on a chair made from a whale's tooth. His robe was purple, and he wore a crown of gold. He had no sword, and received his guests kindly. He ordered a feast spread before them; and sweet music played while they ate. But, in the midst of the feast, they felt they were under a spell, so they could not throw off the semblance of men. Besides, they were unarmed, and Odin had foolishly lent his spear, Gungnir. Their host taunted them with their helplessness.

"Loki had thrown down the dead otter, when he entered the hall. Fafnir and I recognized our brother Otter; and we knew that our father, Reid-

mar, would demand satisfaction for his death. When his guests were completely under his control, Reidmar told them that they had killed his son, Otter, and that they were his prisoners until they could atone for the offense.

"Then Odin said: 'We have indeed done you a grievous wrong; but we will do what we can to compensate you for the injury. You love gold; we will give you gold. It is for you to say how much.'

"Then Reidmar, Fafnir, and I cried out with one voice, 'You shall die, and we will rule the world.'

"Odin answered with calm and awful voice, 'Be just, O Reidmar! How much gold do you require?'

"Then covetous Reidmar forgot his anger and his wisdom; his greed alone spoke out, 'Give me the Flame of the Waters and the Gold of the Sea, which Andvari hides beneath a mountain, until every hair of this dead otter is covered.'

"'Let Loki fetch it,' said Odin; and I released the mischief maker from his bonds.

"In the most distant part of the world there is a place called the Desert of Dread. A great river falls over a terrible precipice; and that waterfall is called the force of Andvari. Andvari was a dark

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" He led Loki into his storehouse and gave him all his gold, even the hauberk of gold, and the Helmet of Dread. When the last piece had been delivered, Andvari turned away, and Loki saw something glitter on his finger, which he made the elf give to him.

" As Andvari drew the ring from his finger, he said: ' I can spare all the rest better than this; for this is the seed of the gold; and with it I can make more gold. But take that, if you will. My curse shall go with it; and, to whomever it is given, he shall have the curse.'

" Loki placed the ring on his finger, and brought the gold to my father's house. When all that golden treasure was heaped upon our floor, it seemed as if the sun itself were shining within our walls.

" Then Odin said to Reidmar, ' The ransom is paid.' But Reidmar said, ' We do not know whether the gold will cover the body of the otter.' So Fafnir and I brought in the otter, and piled the gold around it, until it was all covered, as we thought; but we had taken every piece of the gold. Then Reidmar caught the gleam of the ring, and, at the same time, discovered a hair near the otter's mouth; and he said, ' You shall be my slaves till you give me that ring, the seed of Gold and Grief, to cover this one hair.'

"Then Odin took the ring from Loki's finger and threw it upon the heap, saying, 'I am glad you have it all, even the curse of the elf king.'

"Reidmar laughed, as he answered: 'Who shall do me harm? My sword is Fafnir, and my shield is Regin, the smith.'

"I struck the shackles from the gods, and they went out into the night; but, at the door, Odin turned and warned us of the danger of the love of gold. Then they went away; and the gold was ours.

III. THE CURSE OF THE RING

"I looked upon the gold, and loved it, as it shone upon our faces like the sun. I longed for it, but smiled and begged my father to keep the greater part, but to give Fafnir a share, and me a little handful, for my skill as a smith, and for my help that day. But I might have asked for much or little; for he made no answer. He sat on his ivory throne, and stared at the gold. Fafnir did not speak, but looked at the gold and our father.

"We watched the gold till morning; when Fafnir took his sword, and I, my hammer; and we went out into the world. I came back at night; and, while I longed to see the gold, I dared not go into the hall where it lay. As I lay in my bed, I thought

I heard the clink of the gold, and saw the light. I slept, and dreamed, and woke with a cry. I sprang from my bed, and ran to the hall. Fafnir stood by the gold: at his feet lay our father, whose body was covered with gold, and whose face became white, in death, as I looked. Fafnir wore the Helmet of Dread; and he held his bare sword in his hand.

"'I shall keep the gold,' he said, 'and shall live alone, to guard the gold and take its curse. Will you leave me, or stay until I shed your blood?'

"I fled from the house with neither gold nor tools. I had only my remembering heart and my skillful hands. I came to this land, and taught men to sow and reap; and men said that Frey had taught them husbandry.

"I taught them to work in metals, to sail on the sea, and to tame and use horses; and they said that Thor had taught them all these things. I gave the shuttle to maidens, and taught them to weave; and the needle, and taught them to sew; and, when they were old, they said that they had learned these things from Freya.

"I taught them poetry and music; and they said that Bragi was their teacher, while I was a wandering scald. Still I became a master of masters. But I shall meet my fate by a sword in the hand of a stripling.

"I became wise; but I longed for my brother's gold; and I envied him, when kings gave me golden gifts to pay for my skill. Once I went back to my native land, and found the fields lying waste and desolate. The house was falling; the roof was gone. I looked into the hall, and saw the gold and a great dragon coiled about it. I fled again; and, many years after, I heard men tell of the treasure of gold, that lay on the Glittering Heath, guarded by a dreadful serpent.

"Then I knew the Volsung race; and, at last, I saw you in the house of the Helper. I dreamed dreams, saw your glory, and knew that your sword would win my treasure.

"I think that Fafnir was wiser than I, because he did not waste his treasure on men. But I shall have it all, some day; and then I shall be king of men."

Then he slept, and Sigurd rose, and cried, "Awake, O master." Regin opened his eyes, and said: "Have you listened, Sigurd? Will you avenge the wrong, and win the treasure?" And Sigurd, looking at him with clear eyes, said, "You shall have the treasure and the curse."

THE FORGING OF THE SWORD

I. REGIN'S FAILURES

SIGURD came to Regin again, and said, " I ask a gift at your hands."

Regin answered, " I would reach to the end of the world, to find the gift you need."

" But the gift I require lies near you," said Sigurd; " I want you to forge me a sword."

" Here is your sword," said Regin, " wrought with many charms. I began it when the waning moon was new."

Sigurd took the sword, and looked at the jeweled hilt, and the runes engraved upon the blade, while Regin waited for a word of approval. Sigurd turned and struck the anvil with it; the sword fell in pieces on the earth. Then he went out into the forest.

When two moons had waxed and waned, Sigurd came again to ask about his sword; and Regin said, " I have worked day and night, and my hand has surely lost its cunning, if this fails to satisfy you."

Sigurd struck with it the anvil again; and again the pieces of the sword were shattered.

The next day Sigurd said to his mother, "Where are the pieces of the sword of the Branstock, mother?"

"Are you angry, my son?" she asked.

"No, mother; but the time for deeds has come."

She took his hand, and led him to her treasure chamber; and, unrolling bands of silk, showed him the pieces of his father's sword, which gleamed as white as silver; and the jewels in the hilt shone with as bright a light as when Sigmund plucked it from the oak.

Sigurd smiled, and said: "You have kept your charge well; but your watch is over now. These pieces shall be welded to shine again in the rain of Odin."

She gave him the sacred steel that she had guarded so faithfully. He kissed her gently, and left her standing alone. She did not speak; but, with eager eyes, she watched her godlike son, who had grown so tall and fair and glorious.

II. THE WRATH OF SIGURD

Sigurd went swiftly to Regin's smithy, and gave him the pieces of the broken sword.

"Will nothing else satisfy you?" asked Regin. "This sword, that I fashioned long ago, brought death to your father's father, and to all his sons."

"With this sword I shall slay the serpent and win

the gold," said Sigurd. "It is too late to turn back from the path you bade me take."

When the moon of May was full, Sigurd again sought Regin at midnight. The dwarf was worn and pale, but he said, "I have done as you wished"; and gave Sigurd the welded sword.

Sigurd raised it high above his head, as his father raised it, when he drew it from the Branstock. Then, as he struck a fearful blow upon the anvil, he shouted for joy; for he held the sword, unhurt in his hand, while the anvil was cut in two.

Then Regin took his harp, and sang about making the sword, which he called the Wrath of Sigurd. He sang of how he had forged it long ago, and how he had welded and wrought it again.

Sigurd listened to the song, and said: "I will avenge your wrong, for you have failed me in nothing. The sword is all I could ask."

"Come," said Regin, "let us try the sword in another way."

They went out to the river, and Regin threw a lock of wool into the stream, and held the sword in the water until the current brought it against the blade, which cut the wool in two.

Then they placed the Wrath of Sigurd in a golden sheath, and tied the peace strings.

THE PROPHECY OF GRIPIR

THE next morning Sigurd mounted Greyfell, and rode again to Gripir's house. He entered the hall, and stood leaning on his sword, while he saluted the ancient king.

Gripir said: "Hail, Sigurd!" and welcomed him to his home.

Sigurd said: "Hail, father! I have my new sword, and have come for your parting word."

"What would you hear?" asked Gripir.

"Your word and the Norns'."

"What sight would you see?"

"I would see as the gods see; though the sight be dreadful."

"What hope would you hope?"

"Your hope and the gods'."

The ancient king was silent as he looked at Sigurd, and thought of the future of the youth. Then he spoke of that future, and told Sigurd that he would do valiant deeds, win great wealth, and live with the Cloudy People; but his glorious day would be short.

Then he called Sigurd to sit beside him on his throne, and told him of mighty deeds, of distant lands, of the sea and heavens.

Then Sigurd said that he must not linger, for a war horse as swift as the wind, and his father's sword, had been given him; that he must obey the voice that called him to ride to the Glittering Heath.

So the old king bade the young warrior farewell, and Sigurd returned to Regin when the sun was sinking in the west.

THE GLITTERING HEATH

I. ODIN DIRECTS SIGURD

THE next morning Sigurd rode away with Regin for guide. They soon left the pleasant land of the Helper, and came to the hill country. All day they climbed higher and higher, and at night they slept upon a mountain top. In the morning they looked back to the beautiful country where Sigurd had spent his boyhood, and forward to the range of mountains that rose like a wall before them. For three days they rode over mountains and across deserts. The fourth day they came to a desolate region that was as brass under Greyfell's hoofs. This was the entrance to the Glittering Heath. Sigurd dismounted, and walked carefully, in the thick fog, to meet the terrible dragon.

Regin had fallen back, but Sigurd hardly missed him, he was so intent on finding the guardian of the treasure. Suddenly a man appeared in his path, one-eyed and old, wrapped in a cloud-gray cloak, and wearing a broad-brimmed hat.

"Hail, Sigurd!" he said.

"Hail! I greet you, my friend and my father's friend," answered Sigurd.

Odin asked where Sigurd was going. Sigurd answered that he was going to slay the dragon that guarded the golden treasure.

"Then let me tell you what to do," said Odin. "You will find a slot worn in the stone. It is the path worn by the dragon in his daily journey after water. Dig a pit in this path, and lie in it with your naked sword in your hand."

Sigurd worked all night; and at daybreak the pit was dug. He lay in it, with his sword in his hand. The light was growing brighter, when he heard a noise like the trampling of many feet, and the tinkle and clatter of gold dragged over the earth. The sounds came nearer, and the light was shut off. It seemed to Sigurd, that an inky river rolled over the pit, and the air was heavy with the poisonous breath of the serpent; when Sigurd made an upward thrust with his sword, and pierced the heart of the dragon. Then he leaped out; and, as he stood with uplifted sword by the side of the dead monster, seven eagles settled on a mountain peak, and uttered hoarse cries.

Sigurd was still standing by the dragon, when Regin came up and reproached him with the murder of his brother.

Sigurd Slaying the Dragon.

Sigurd Slaying the Dragon.

"I have done your deed," said Sigurd; "and now we must part."

"You have slain my brother," said Regin; "what atonement can you make?"

"Take the gold," said Sigurd, "as a ransom for my head."

"You have slain my brother," repeated Regin. Then he drew his sword, and cut a piece of the dragon's flesh, which he ordered Sigurd to cook for him, while he lay down and slept.

Sigurd found waste wood in the heath, with which he made a fire. He fixed the piece of flesh on a spit, and held it to roast. The eagles flew down, and sat near him, while he cooked. He put out his hand, to see whether the meat were done; and some of the juice of the dripping meat fell on it, and burned his finger. He unconsciously put his finger into his mouth, and tasted the meat juice. Then he understood what the eagles were saying.

II. THE EAGLES' COUNSEL

The first eagle asked why he waited so long, to roast the meat.

The second said, "Go, for the king's feast awaits you."

The third said, "How great is the feast of him, who feeds on wisdom."

The fourth said, "Will you let Regin live, to spread waste and ruin over the world?"

The fifth said, "Regin knew that a youth would slay him; but he intends to slay the youth."

The sixth said, "He has lost all sense of truth, in his greed for gold."

The seventh said, "Hasten, Sigurd! Strike while he dreams."

Then Sigurd, for the second time, lifted his sword; and Regin lay dead beside the dragon, slain by the stripling for whom he had forged the sword, and whom he had planned to kill.

III. SIGURD TAKES THE TREASURE AND THE CURSE

Sigurd sheathed his sword, and mounted Greyfell. The eagles flew about his head, as he rode along the path of the serpent, to the ruins of the golden house, of which Regin had told him. The hoard of gold lay in heaps upon the floor. There were coins from ancient cities, golden armor, magic rings and bracelets, and blocks of gold, just as the elfin miners had cut them from the rock. The hauberk of gold and the Helmet of Dread lay with the rest. Brighter than all gleamed Andvari's

ring; the ring that Loki had taken, that Odin had asked for, and that Reidmar had demanded to cover the last hair of the otter; the ring that bore the curse.

Sigurd put on the hauberk of gold, the Helmet of Dread, and the fatal ring. Then he carried out the gold, while the eagles screamed, " Bind the red rings, O Sigurd."

He worked all night; and, in the morning, took Greyfell by the bridle, to lead him from the Glittering Heath, because he thought that the weight of the gold was enough for the horse to carry. But Greyfell refused to stir, until Sigurd, clad in all his armor, vaulted into the saddle; when he bore his royal master across the desolate waste, to the green world beyond.

BRYNHILD

I. THE SLEEPING MAIDEN

DAY after day, Sigurd rode, always rising higher and higher, until he came to a lofty mountain. Its peak was capped with clouds, through which fire seemed ready to burst. Sigurd thought that, from the top of this mountain, he could get a view of the country he was about to cross; so he began the ascent. The fire burned brighter and brighter, until flames appeared above the clouds. Then the clouds thickened, and hid the mountain. Night fell around them; but Sigurd encouraged Greyfell; and they went on in the darkness.

As they climbed up a great rock, the whole summit appeared as a mass of flame. At dawn they came to a plain, from which they could see the topmost peak, surrounded by a circle of fire. But neither horse nor rider hesitated.

As they approached the flaming wall, Sigurd bent low over the horse's neck, and spoke kindly to him. Then he tightened the saddle girth, grasped the reins firmly, and, with his sword unsheathed

in his right hand, urged Greyfell to make the daring leap.

Greyfell plunged into the flames, which had blazed more fiercely as horse and rider approached the circle. As they dashed through it, the fire leaped up as if to grasp them both, and then died away, leaving a ring of white ashes.

A castle stood before them. Sigurd entered the open gate and passed through the hall. He came to a mound, on which lay a warrior clad in armor. Sigurd unclasped the warrior's helmet, and beheld the face of a sleeping woman. He cut the rings of her armor with his sword; and she still lay asleep, dressed in fine white linen, with her golden hair covering her breast. Sigurd knelt beside her and woke her with a kiss.

II. THE MAIDEN TELLS HER NAME

"What is your name, O fairest of the earth?" he said. "I am Sigurd, son of Volsung. I have slain the terrible dragon and taken the hoard of gold."

She answered: "My name is Brynhild. I was one of the daughters of earth, but the All-father took me, and made me a Shield maiden. I was one of the band of Valkyries, who hovered over

battle fields, to decide victories, and to bear the slain to Odin's halls. Once he sent me to attend a single combat, and bade me give the victory to an ancient robber king. I knew the story of the quarrel which led to this fight; and I loved the fair maiden who must wed the victor. So I pricked the robber with the point of my sword, and carried him to Valhalla; and left the handsome young lover to take his bride.

"For my disobedience, Odin said that I must again become a woman, and also a wife. I begged that my husband might be a hero, who knew no fear. Odin said, 'That request I will grant, but you will have long to wait for that hero.'

"He brought me to the top of this mountain, Hindfell, and pricked me with a sleep thorn; and, striking the rocks with his spear, made the ring of flickering flame, through which you rode. I knew no more until you woke me just now."

Then she talked with Sigurd; and her words showed that she was the wisest as well as the most beautiful of women.

III. THE BETROTHAL

Brynhild was satisfied that Sigurd was a fearless hero; so it was settled that they should be married

at her sister's home in Lymdale, where she would go at once.

Sigurd said:—

"O Brynhild, now hearken while I swear,
That the sun shall die in the heavens, and the day no more be fair,
If I seek not love in Lymdale, and the house that fostered thee,
And the land where thou awakest 'twixt the woodland and the sea!"

Brynhild answered:—

"O Sigurd, Sigurd, now hearken while I swear,
That the day shall die forever, and the sun to blackness wear,
Ere I forget thee, Sigurd, as I lie 'twixt wood and sea,
In the little land of Lymdale, and the house that fostered me."

Then Sigurd, forgetting the curse, placed on her finger the ring of Andvari. After this he remounted Greyfell and rode onward over the mountain. But Brynhild hastened to the house of her sister in Lymdale.

GUDRUN'S DREAMS

I. WHY THE PRINCESS WAS SAD

In the Land of Cloudy Mists lived a people known as the Niblungs. They were brave and warlike, and had never known defeat in battle. Their king and queen were Giuki and Grimhild, who had three sons and one daughter. The eldest son, Gunnar, was tall and fair; the second, Hogni, was very wise; the third, Guttorm, was a great warrior; and their daughter, Gudrun, was very beautiful.

One morning Gudrun, who was as charming in manner as she was pleasing in person, passed down the garden walk, without speaking to any of her attendants. Her nurse came to ask her why she had left unnoticed the things of which she was so fond; why she did not speak to her maidens, or go to her embroidery, or join in the chase.

"To-morrow I shall do as I have always done," she answered; "to-day I am sad, because I cannot forget the dream that came to me last night."

"Tell me your dream," said the nurse; "for dreams often indicate only the weather."

Gudrun said: "I thought I sat by the door of my father's hall, and saw a falcon come from the north. His feathers were golden, and his eyes were as bright as crystal in the sunshine. Men feared him, but I felt no fear. My heart was light with hope. He hovered over the Niblung palace, and then flew down to my knees. He cried out to me, and I clasped him in my arms."

"This falcon is a king's son," said the nurse, "who has won honor for his noble deeds, and will come to ask you to be his bride."

"You give good interpretations to my dreams, because you love me," said Gudrun. "My mother, Grimhild, is also wise; but she turns my dreams to evil."

"Your dream is easy to read, and its meaning is good," said the nurse; "but, if you are in doubt, let us go to Lymdale, to consult Brynhild, who is skillful in all such matters. She will give the same meaning that I have given; but your confidence in her will give you peace."

"Let us go to Brynhild," said Gudrun.

II. THE VISIT TO BRYNHILD

So the wagons were prepared, the maidens dressed for travel, and Gudrun hastened to Lym-

dale. When they arrived at the white castle by the sea, Brynhild's maidens came out to meet them, and lead them into the hall.

Brynhild had been sitting at her embroidery, and she led Gudrun to the frames, on which she was working pictures of great deeds. For a while, they asked and answered questions about each other's friends; then the maidens brought a dainty repast, and talked of kings and heroes, and asked who was the greatest hero. Brynhild spoke of kings of distant lands, and Gudrun said, "Why do you not name my brothers, who are called the greatest men of our time?"

"Your brothers are great kings," answered Brynhild, "but I have seen one greater than they. His name is Sigurd the Volsung, son of King Sigmund."

Gudrun trembled and turned pale, but asked, "How do you know that Sigurd is the greatest king?"

"His mother went to the battle field," said Brynhild, "and found King Sigmund lying among the slain. He was mortally wounded, but still alive. He told her that her son would be a greater king than he, and he had been greater than any king who ever lived.

"Young Sigurd was brought up in the house of

the Helper, and every day he did some wonderful thing. He has already killed the terrible dragon that guarded the golden treasure, and he will soon come to us across the mountains."

Gudrun was silent, then rose and said: "It is late; the guard of the Niblung gate looks in vain for the light dust of our golden wagons. Come with your maidens to my father's house, and we will welcome you, as you have welcomed us to-day."

Brynhild thanked her for her kind and cheerful words, but looked into her sad eyes, and said, "Stay with your friends, who wish you only happiness."

Then Gudrun said: "I came to tell you my dreams, for I knew you were wise and true. I dare not tell my mother, and I fear the mocking laughter of the wise women, when they hear a maiden's dream."

"I shall not mock," said Brynhild, "but I may not be able to give you the help you need."

"This was my dream," said Gudrun: "I thought I was sitting at the door one morning, when a falcon came out of the north. He flew over the kingdoms of men, and filled their hearts with fear. Then he circled about the Niblung castle, and my heart beat high with hope.

"He was a beautiful creature; his feathers were like gold, and his eyes flashed like crystal in the

sunshine. He flew down to my knees, and I took him in my arms."

"That is indeed a good dream," said Brynhild. "A great king will make you his queen."

"I have not told you all," said Gudrun. "With joy I clasped him to my breast, and it was stained with purple blood. My heart grew cold and heavy as lead. I laid my hand upon it, and my falcon was gone."

Now Brynhild was pale, but she said: "Fear not, O daughter of Niblungs. The king will come and wed you, and you will be happy. Do not think it strange that changes should come to a great and warlike race. Your husband will fall dead beside you, but that is not the worst that could befall you. Do not think of his death, but of his glorious career."

"After this dream, I dreamed again," said Gudrun. "I thought I sat in the garden, and a hart came out of the forest. His hair was golden, and his antlers glittered in the sun. He was the noblest deer ever seen. He came to me and laid his head upon my arm. Then a fair queen came and sat beside me. The heavens grew black, and in the gathering darkness I saw a hand and arm, with the jewels and rings of the queen. There was a sudden sword thrust, and my beautiful hart lay dead at my feet.

"I cried out in anguish. I was no longer in the garden, but in the depths of the forest. Wild wolves howled around me, and I called them my friends. I spoke in strange language, and my hands were wet with blood."

For a long time Brynhild was silent. At last she said: "This dream is the same as the other. The hart from the forest is a great king from a foreign land. He shall be slain at your feet; but be comforted, for you have had the spring of life, and the summer draws near. The daughter of a conquering race would not desire constant peace. You will have joy and sorrow. You may understand the howling wolves, and your right hand may be wet with blood, but rejoice in the love that you have, and in that which shall come. And come again to Lymdale, to bless the friends who love you."

They drank the parting cup. The Niblung maidens put on their dark blue cloaks, and the golden wains were driven slowly homeward, under the light of the moon.

SIGURD AT LYMDALE

I. HIS ARRIVAL

HEIMIR, king of Lymdale, whose wife was the sister of Brynhild, had brave sons and fair daughters. He was a valiant king, and often led his warriors in battle, but in time of peace he taught them to cultivate the rich fields of Lymdale, and to look after their sheep and cattle.

One spring morning, King Heimir and his princes and earls were about to mount their horses for the chase, when they saw a warrior approaching. He rode a gray horse, and his armor was all of gold. His fair hair waved in the breeze, and his bright eyes won the hearts of all who looked upon him.

Heimir, putting away his spear, saluted the stranger, whom he begged to stay with his people for a little time, and, offering him the hospitality of his home, asked whence he came.

The horseman answered: "I am the son of a king, but I alone am left of all my kin. I am of the Volsung race, and they were the sons of Odin.

I am young, but I have sought wisdom. I have no army, but I, alone, have slain the dragon, and taken his treasure. My name is Sigurd, and I was brought up in the land of the Helper. I am grateful for your welcome, and to-night I will stay in your palace, but to-morrow I must go to Lymdale."

As Sigurd leaped from the saddle, Heimir said: "You have already come to Lymdale. I am King Heimir, and am better skilled in the touch of the harp than in the arts of war."

The princes and earls, who had heard of Sigurd's exploits, looked with admiration on his bright face. They gave up the hunt, and went with him into Heimir's hall, where they spent the day in feasting and song. They talked of the dragon and the Glittering Heath. Four strong men brought in the treasure, and the earls gazed, with ever-increasing wonder, at the shining armor, the cunningly wrought rings, and the blocks of gold.

II. SIGURD FINDS BRYNHILD

The next day they went out to hunt. Sigurd was riding alone; the hounds had gone on, and his hawk was sitting on his hand. He was thinking of Brynhild, when he saw a white house among the trees, on the roof of which many doves were sitting

in the sun. The hawk flew straight as an arrow toward the house. Sigurd expected to see him attack the doves; but he flew to a window in the tower, and looked within. Then he cried out, as the ravens of Odin cry when they see the morning sun, and flew in at the casement.

"Here is the dwelling of an earl," thought Sigurd, "or perhaps of a prince, of whom they have not told me. I will go in to claim my hawk, and find a friend."

No servant answered his call, so he entered the open door. He saw a staircase, and followed the stairway, which led to a chamber in the tower. His hawk was perched in a window, and on a raised seat sat a beautiful woman, clothed in white, with gold bracelets on her arms. Her embroidery frames stood before her, and in a golden web she was working scenes from the lives of the Volsungs, such as the taking of the sword from the Branstock, the death of Sigmund, Queen Hiordis in the house of the Helper, the beautiful babe named by the Helper and his son, the child in the smithy of the dwarf, the youth taking Greyfell, the forging of the sword, the dragon on his bed of gold, the eagles on the Glittering Heath, the death of the dragon and the dwarf, the journey across the desert, the flaming mountain top, Greyfell and his rider dashing

through the fire, the sleeping maiden, forests, meadows, cities, and seas, and Sigurd in them all.

With wonder Sigurd saw all this, as he stood in the doorway, and when the woman raised her head, he looked into the eyes of Brynhild. Both were silent. Sigurd was the first to speak, "Hail, lady and queen! hail, fairest of the earth!"

Brynhild answered him kindly, as she rose, and led him to a seat beside her. They talked of their separation, and of the joy of meeting again.

Brynhild said:—

"I bid thee remember the word that I have sworn,
How the sun shall turn to blackness, and the last day be outworn,
Ere I forget thee, Sigurd, and the kindness of thy face."

Sigurd answered:—

"O Brynhild, remember how I swore,
That the sun should die in the heavens, and day come back no more,
Ere I forget thy wisdom, and thine heart of inmost love."

Then they talked of the days to come, when they should sit on the throne together.

And they saw their crowned children, and the kindred of the kings,
And deeds in the world arising, and the day of better things,
All the earthly exaltation, till their pomp of life should be passed,
And soft on the bosom of God their love should be laid at the last.

SIGURD AT THE PALACE OF THE NIBLUNGS

I. GIUKI'S WELCOME TO SIGURD

THE household of Heimir had risen early; the great hall was filled with earls, and shepherds thronged at the gates. Even the housewives had left their baking and brewing, and the maidens had forgotten the bright colors of their weaving and embroidery. But it was impossible to tell whether the people were moved so strangely by sorrow or by joy. Suddenly their voices were hushed, and their heads were bowed, for Heimir's hand swept the harp strings, and he sang a farewell song to the guest who had grown so dear. Then a shout went up, as the gates were opened and the earls came out. The people fell back to make way for Sigurd, who, clad in golden armor, and mounted on Greyfell, rode out to bid them all good-by. Another shout arose, though many were silent from grief at parting with their royal guest. They watched until Greyfell disappeared in a turn of the road, then each went back to his work, sorry that Sigurd had gone.

Sigurd rode westward from Lymdale, over plains and across mountains, through valleys and along river banks, until he came to a great stone gateway. There was no sentinel to stop him, and he rode through a long passage, which brought him to a palace court yard. The beautiful horse, golden armor, and more than all the magnificent form and dignified bearing of the rider, attracted the attention of the earls, so that they sent to tell the king.

Before the king came, Sigurd had ridden to the entrance and asked to what country he had come, and who lived in the palace.

"You have come to the land of the Niblungs, and this is the home of King Giuki," answered one of the earls.

Then King Giuki came, and asked, "Who is this who rides into my castle without permission?"

"I am Sigurd, the Volsung, son of Sigmund," was the answer; and Giuki, who had heard of Sigurd's daring, welcomed him most kindly.

Sigurd had already made friends of the king's retainers, who rejoiced when Giuki led him into the hall and presented him to Queen Grimhild, and to his sons, Gunnar, Hogni, and Guttorm, and to his daughter, Gudrun.

Grimhild and the young kings greeted him

kindly; Gudrun alone was silent, and at last she said, as she offered him a cup: —

"Hail, Sigurd the Volsung! may I see thy joy increase,
Thy shielded sons beside thee, and thy days grown old in peace."

He took the cup and thanked her, but his thoughts were with Brynhild.

King Giuki ordered a feast, and the kings and nobles passed the night in feasting and song and happy conversation.

II. SIGURD LEADS THE NIBLUNGS TO WAR

Sigurd stayed in the house of Giuki week after week. When he spoke of going away, a hunting party was planned, or some one remembered that a festival must be kept, or games of skill and strength were proposed.

At midwinter, news came that an enemy was about to attack the Niblungs. Sigurd offered to assist his new friends in the war, and one winter morning, long before dawn, the army of the Niblungs marched eastward, with three young kings at its head. Sigurd was chief in command, Gunnar rode on his right, and Hogni on his left. All men loved Sigurd, and it was easy to distinguish him by

his hauberk of gold, his Helmet of Dread, and his fair hair.

The enemy melted like wax before the fire under the stroke of Sigurd's sword. Before spring the last foe was gone, and minstrels sang the praise of Sigurd in the Niblung hall. This was a part of their song:—

"When the sun of summer shall come aback to the land,
It shall shine on the fields of the tiller that fears no heavy hand,
That the sheaf shall be for the plower, and the loaf for him that sowed,
Through every furrowed acre, where the son of Sigmund rode."

Sigurd was dear to rich and poor alike. Little children crowded about the gate to catch a glimpse of his golden armor when he went in or out, and mothers brought their babes, that the glance of his bright eyes might rest upon them for an instant.

Gudrun stood in the hall and filled the cups of the victorious kings while the earls brought in the spoil. There were jeweled swords, crowns of kings, shields and spears, rings and silken garments, which they gave to Giuki, saying, "Sigurd won our battles and led us to all these things."

Sigurd came in, and kissed the hands of Giuki and Grimhild, who loved him as they loved their own sons, to whom he was both friend and leader.

But he was dearer to Gudrun than to all the rest, although the name of Brynhild was ever on his lips.

His fame spread over the seas; and merchants told the story of his prowess in all the kingdoms of the world. Wise men came to visit him; and poets sang of his glory. Still he lingered in the house of the Niblungs.

III. THE CUP OF FORGETFULNESS

In early summer, an enemy from the north came to make war on the Niblungs. Again Sigurd went with the three young kings, and led them to victory. As he stood among the dark-haired Niblung warriors, he longed to leave all, and return to Lymdale, to seek the fair maiden who was waiting for him, in the white castle. But he went back with the victors to Giuki's palace, and sat on the high seat at the feast, though his thoughts went over the mountains to Brynhild.

The sound of the revels grew louder; but Sigurd remained silent, until Giuki asked him to sing of the gods and heroes. They brought a harp, and Sigurd sang of Odin, Rerir, Volsung, Signy, and Sigmund. The people listened attentively; and, as the song went on, they seemed to see the Branstock

and all the brave deeds of Sigmund; and they loved Sigurd more than ever.

Grimhild rose and stood by Sigurd, and said, as she gave him a cup: "None of these ancient kings did deeds as great as yours. You have sung of your fathers, but men shall sing of you, and remember the house of the Niblungs, in their songs. Drink of this cup; for my love is mixed with the wine."

Sigurd took the drinking horn from her hand, and held it, while he noticed the exquisite carving; and smiled upon Grimhild as he drank the wine. He did not know that she had given him a magic potion. As soon as he had sipped the wine, a change came over him; and the people who loved him felt a chill. A shadow settled upon his face; the hall grew dark.

Grimhild alone was happy; for she saw, from Sigurd's eyes, that she had conquered a brave warrior, and filled a faithful heart with deceit. She bade Sigurd be merry, although his kin had passed away; because he had found a new mother in her love, a new father in Giuki, and brothers in their sons, Gunnar, Hogni, and Guttorm. Then she told him of the glory that would come to the Niblung house through his valiant deeds.

As Sigurd listened, the magic potion worked;

Grimhild Giving the Magic Cup.

and he forgot Brynhild. The people sat silent, as if the breath of a coming frost had swept over the summer land, and the earls looked in sorrow upon the dimmed eyes of Sigurd.

In Lymdale, as Brynhild was sitting at her embroidery, a sudden fear smote her heart, and a circle of flame sprang up around her dwelling.

The Niblung minstrels tried to sing; but their notes were discordant and died away; no sound was heard except the cries of the eagles and the sighing of the wind. One by one the people passed out, until Sigurd was left alone. He went to the stables and saddled a horse, but not Greyfell; he had forgotten Greyfell. He rode to Brynhild's house; but he had forgotten Brynhild. His horse dared not approach the flickering flames. Sigurd turned and rode away, without knowing where he was, until he heard the shout of the Niblung earls, who welcomed him home again.

Sigurd asked what deeds there were for his sword. Grimhild came to lead him to his place, and the three young kings greeted him with loving words. Sigurd could not understand his own sorrow; but he knew that the Niblungs were all very kind to him, and said, "I will try to do as I have always done, and perhaps the cloud will clear away." So he took his seat beside the kings, and spoke to the

people. Their fear vanished at the sound of his voice, and all things went on as before, though Sigurd never smiled.

Then Grimhild mixed another potion in a golden goblet, and bade Gudrun take it to Sigurd, who forgot his own trouble in pity for the sad-eyed girl. He tried to cheer her, and said: "The people about us are glad, and we alone are silent and sorrowful. Now if we might comfort each other: —

"Then belike were we gladdest of all; for I love thee more than these,
The cup of goodwill that thou bearest, and the greetings thou wouldst say,
Turn thee to the cup of thy love, and the words of the troth-plighting day."

The next morning Sigurd dimly remembered the words that he had spoken to Gudrun. So he rose quickly and sought her in the garden, and said to her: —

"O Gudrun, now hearken while I swear,
That the sun shall die forever, and the day no more be fair,
If I forget thy pity and thine inmost heart of love!"

And she answered: —

"Herewith I swear, O Sigurd, that the earth shall hate the sun,
And the year desire but darkness, and the blossoms shrink from day,
Ere my love shall fail, beloved, or my longing pass away!"

Then they went into the hall. Giuki, Grimhild, and their sons greeted them kindly; and Sigurd said to Giuki: —

"Stretch forth thy hands to thy son; for I bid thy daughter to wife,
And her life shall withhold my death day, and her death shall stay my life."

Giuki replied: —

"Hail, Sigurd, son of mine eld!
And I bless the gods for the day that mine ancient eyes here beheld.
Now let me depart in peace, since I know for very sooth,
That waxen e'en as the God-folk shall the Niblungs blossom in youth.
Come, take thy mother's greeting, and let thy brethren say
How well they love thee, Sigurd, and how fair they deem the day."

IV. THE WEDDING OF SIGURD AND GUDRUN

The wedding day dawned fair and bright. People thronged to the Niblung castle from fields and forests. The earls were there, and kings came dressed in purple. The benches in the hall were covered with cloths embroidered in gold, and strewn with flowers. The name of Sigurd, the Volsung, was heard on every hand.

For men drink the bridal of Sigurd and the white-armed Niblung maid.

In the midst of the feasting and laughter all voices were hushed, and the glitter of swords appeared in the doorway, while warriors, clad in armor, brought in the cup of promise and the roasted head of the sacred boar. Sigurd rose; and, unfastening the peace strings from his sword, he laid it on the boar's head while he spoke the words of the ancient oath: —

"By the Earth that groweth and giveth, and by all the Earth's increase,
That is spent for gods and man folk; by the sun that shines on these;
By the Salt-Sea Flood that beareth the life and death of men;
By the Heavens and Stars that change not, though earth die out again;
By the wild things of the mountains, and the houseless waste and lone,
By the prey of the Goths in the thicket, and the holy Beast of Sôn,
I hallow me to Odin, for a leader of his host,
To do the deeds of the highest, and never count the cost;
And I swear, that whatso great one shall show the day and the deed,
I shall not ask why nor wherefore; but the sword's desire shall speed.
And I swear to seek no quarrel, nor to swerve aside for aught,
Though the right and the left be blooming, and the straight way wend to naught;
And I swear to abide and hearken the prayer of any thrall,
Though the war torch be on the threshold, and the foeman's feet in the hall;

And I swear to sit on my throne, in the guise of the kings of the
earth,
Though the anguish past amending, and the unheard woe have
birth;
And I swear to wend in my sorrow, that none shall curse mine
eyes
For the scowl that quelleth beseeching, and the hate that scorneth
the wise.
So help me, Earth and Heavens, and the Under-sky and Seas,
And the Stars in their ordered courses, and the Norns that order
these."

Then he drank the cup of promise. The daughters of earls refilled the cup, as Gunnar advanced with the unsheathed sword of the Niblungs in his hand. He also laid the edge of the sword upon the boar's head, while he took the oath, and drank the cup of promise.

The maidens again filled the cup; and Hogni took the oath, with his naked sword lying on the boar's head. Then it was Guttorm's turn; but his place was empty, for he had grown tired of peace, and had gone to seek glory on the eastern seas.

Giuki blessed his sons, and Sigurd took his place by Gudrun. But his heart was filled with fear, and she trembled as she remembered her dreams.

THE WOOING OF BRYNHILD

I. THE OATH OF BROTHERHOOD

Soon after the wedding, Sigurd went to the Doom Ring with Gunnar and Hogni. They cut a piece of turf, and turned it back, so as to leave the earth exposed. With the point of his sword, each opened a vein in his arm; and they let the blood trickle down into the earth. Then they knelt, with their hands upon the spot that had received the blood, and took the oath of brotherhood: —

Each man, at his brother's bidding, to come with the blade in his hand,
Though the fire and the flood should sunder, and the very gods withstand.
Each man to love and cherish his brother's hope and will;
Each man to avenge his brother, when the Norns his fate fulfill.

Sigurd took part in all the work of the kings, and often sat in the Doom Ring, to decide the disputes of the people. The poor were glad to see him there, because he always saw that justice was done; and it is said that the sorrowful loved him best.

II. GRIMHILD URGES GUNNAR TO WED

The old king, Giuki, died; and Gunnar succeeded him on the throne.

One day, Grimhild came to him, and said: "You have been a good son, a brave warrior, and a wise ruler; but the reign of the Niblungs will end with you, unless you take a wife from among the kings' daughters."

Gunnar answered: "You are not speaking hastily, mother? You must have found the king's daughter whom you would have me choose."

Grimhild said: "In the land of Lymdale is a golden-roofed castle, around which fierce fires burn continually. Within the castle dwells the wisest of maidens, who is as beautiful as she is wise, and as brave as she is beautiful. Yet the sons of the kings pass by, because they are afraid of the flickering flame. She has said that she will wed the man who knows no fear; but he must prove his courage by riding through the circle of fire."

Then she appealed to Sigurd, to urge Gunnar to win this maiden for his bride. And Sigurd answered that, of all the sons of men, it was most fitting that Gunnar should wed this peerless maiden.

Gunnar said: "I am contented with my kingdom,

and satisfied with the companionship of my brothers; but, in obedience to my mother's wish, I will try to win this princess."

"Not yet, my son," said Grimhild; "we must know the will of the Norns."

Then Grimhild shut herself up alone, and mixed a magic drink, which she gave to her three sons, to make them do her bidding. She told Gunnar many tales, which made him think of the maiden by day, and dream of her by night.

III. SIGURD WINS BRYNHILD FOR GUNNAR

One morning in May, Gunnar rose early and called his brothers, Sigurd and Hogni, to go with him to seek the maiden. They had put on their armor, and their war steeds were ready, when Grimhild came out to give them her blessing, and wish them success. Then they rode away to Lymdale.

Toward evening, they came in sight of the fire; and, as night came on, they rode in silence, with drawn swords in hand. The Wrath of Sigurd sent out red gleams, and the Helmet of Dread shone red as blood, in the light of the fire.

Gunnar rode up to the circle of fire; but his war horse, for the first time, refused to obey his command; and, instead of entering the flames, wheeled

and carried his rider to the place where the two kings were standing.

Hogni said: "Take Sigurd's horse." So Sigurd gave Greyfell to Gunnar, and offered him his armor. But Hogni thought that Gunnar had better keep his own armor.

Gunnar thanked Sigurd; and, springing into the saddle, gathered the reins in his hand; but Greyfell refused to stir. Gunnar cried out in anger that Sigurd was mocking him; but Hogni said, "Come, Gunnar, stand by Sigurd, take his hand in yours, and look into his face."

Gunnar took Sigurd's hand, while Hogni repeated his mother's magic words, which made them exchange forms, so that Sigurd looked like Gunnar, and Gunnar looked like Sigurd.

Sigurd, in the shape of Gunnar, leaped into the saddle; and Greyfell bore him safely through the circle of fire, which died away, leaving a ring of white ashes, after the horse and rider had passed.

Sigurd entered the hall, and found Brynhild sitting upon the throne, with a gold crown on her head, and a sword in her hand. Her face was stern and sorrowful; for she had been confident that none but Sigurd would ride through the flickering flame; and now she saw the steel-blue armor and long black hair of the Niblung king.

They gazed at each other in silence until Brynhild said: —

"King, King, who art thou, that cometh, thou lord of the cloudy gear?"

Sigurd answered, with Gunnar's voice, that he was Gunnar, King of the Niblungs. Then he reminded her of her promise to wed the man who should ride through the fire; and he claimed her as the Queen of the Niblungs.

Brynhild was silent for a time. At last she called him to the high seat, and said that she would be Gunnar's wife. He drew his sword, and they sat with the naked blade between them while they talked. When it was time for him to go back to the brothers, he gave Brynhild a gold ring; and she drew from her finger the ring of Andvari, and gave it to him, saying, "It was my dearest treasure."

Sigurd put the ring on his finger; but it brought no memory of the past. He strode out of the hall, mounted Greyfell, and rode away, with downcast eyes.

Hogni spoke to him; and, looking up, he saw a man in golden armor, sitting on a horse. Sigurd did not speak, but stretched out his hand to Gunnar: and they looked into each other's eyes, until the charm of Grimhild's words, uttered by

Hogni, changed them into their own forms again. Then Sigurd said to Gunnar, "Brynhild will be your wife, and will come to the Niblung palace within ten days."

The three kings returned to the Niblung hall, and told Grimhild how Sigurd had won a bride for Gunnar; and she made a feast in honor of his success. After the feast, Gudrun asked Sigurd how it was that he wore a different ring on his finger. He told her that Brynhild had given it to him, thinking that he was Gunnar; and that Brynhild then had the ring that he was accustomed to wear. Then, with loving words, he took the ring from his finger and put it on Gudrun's.

IV. THE WEDDING OF BRYNHILD AND GUNNAR

Early on the morning of the tenth day, the watchman on the tower called out that many people were coming over the mountains. Then the kings rode out to meet Brynhild and her attendants.

Brynhild rode alone in a golden wagon drawn by snow-white oxen. She sat on a carved-ivory seat, covered with dark blue bench cloths. She saluted the Niblungs, and they rode together to the king's house. When they arrived at the gate, she stood up and blessed the house of Gunnar. The tall war

Brynhild.

chiefs came out to meet her, and, in the doorway, she saw one in cloudy garments whom she recognized as Gunnar from his ruddy cheeks and long black hair; and she blessed him as the hero of the flickering flame.

Then she received the war duke's greeting; and Gunnar presented his brother, Hogni, but he said that his youngest brother, Guttorm, had gone to the eastern wars; and she asked, "Who is the fourth king? I thought there were but three."

Gunnar answered that the fourth king was not of their blood, but that he had been their most welcome guest, and was now their brother, and that his name was Sigurd the Volsung.

She knew the name, but she turned, unmoved, to receive the homage of the Niblung people, and the greeting of Grimhild. Sigurd looked down from the high seat where he sat by Gudrun's side. Grimhild's spell was broken, and he remembered the sleeping maiden and the words they had spoken on Hindfell's top.

He led Gudrun down to Brynhild, who greeted him very kindly, though she had no word for Gudrun. The music sounded in the hall; the eagles screamed above the roof; and the wedding feast began.

THE QUARREL OF THE QUEENS

I. THE MORNING BATH

GUTTORM returned from the wars, and took his former place in the hearts of the Niblungs, although he had learned to love fighting above all things.

Brynhild was Queen of the Niblungs, and no one guessed that she was unhappy. She often talked with Gudrun, and boasted of her husband, Gunnar, who rode through the fire to win her. But Gudrun said nothing in reply, though she well knew the story of that ride.

Hogni, the wise, grew wiser every day. He alone understood the scheming of his mother, Grimhild; and saw that her feet were going down a path from which they could never return.

Gunnar lived quietly with his wife, though he listened to his mother, who talked constantly of the "hoard of gold," "supplanters of kings," and "leaders of war." He said it was nothing; but, in the long hours of the night, he turned his mother's words in his mind, and wondered whether Sigurd were a "supplanter of kings."

One morning, Brynhild rose early to go to the baths in the river. She had hardly passed the screen of rose and hawthorn, when she saw Gudrun, and bade her go into the water first, because she was the sister of Gunnar.

Gudrun said that a wife was more than a sister, and that if Sigurd's sister were there, she would not give place to her sister-in-law. But, since Sigurd was the greater king, she would accept Brynhild's courtesy; and she stepped into the water.

Brynhild then waded far out into the stream, and Gudrun asked why she went so far away. She replied that they must always be far apart, because she was the wife of a great king, who rode through the flickering flame to win her, while Sigurd stood waiting at the door like a servant; besides, Sigurd was only a vassal of the Helper.

Gudrun waded up the stream to Brynhild; and holding out her hand on which sparkled the ring of Andvari, said, "You may know by this, whether the greatest of kings and the bravest of men is your husband."

Brynhild grew white, as she asked, "By all you love, where did you get that ring?"

Gudrun laughed and said, "Do you think that my brother Gunnar gave this ring to me?" and then she told Brynhild that Sigurd had given it to

her, on his return from Lymdale where, in the form of Gunnar, he had ridden through the flickering flame, and secured her promise to be the wife of Gunnar and the Queen of the Niblungs.

Then Brynhild, pale as death, sprang upon the bank, threw her robe about her, and ran across the fields. But Gudrun came slowly from the water with triumph in her face.

II. GUDRUN'S REPENTANCE

As Gudrun walked home, she remembered that Sigurd had charged her to say nothing about the ride through the flickering flame, or the ring of Andvari; and she was sorry that she had spoken so hastily. In the evening, she went to Brynhild, to ask her to forgive the words spoken in the morning.

Brynhild said that she regretted her own thoughtless words, and that she would forget it all, if Gudrun would only say that her brother Gunnar had given her the ring. But Gudrun said, "Shall I tell a lie to hide the shame of Gunnar?" and she showed the ring again, and repeated the story she had told in the morning.

Brynhild turned and cursed the house that she had blessed on her wedding day. Then, overcome

with chagrin, she lay ill upon her bed. Gunnar came to comfort her, and to beg her to tell him of her trouble.

She said, "Tell me, Gunnar, that you gave Andvari's ring to Gudrun."

Gunnar left the room, without speaking.

Gudrun sent her maidens to Brynhild; but they came back, saying they dared not enter her chamber. She sought her brother, Gunnar, whom she found sitting alone, with his drawn sword lying across his knees; and she said: "O Gunnar, go to her and say that my heart is grieved with her grief, and I mourn for her evil day." But Gunnar said he could not undo the work of a traitor.

She hastened to Hogni, who sat with his armor on, and his naked sword lying across his knees; and entreated him to convey her message to Brynhild.

But he said: "I will not go to Brynhild, lest I make the matter worse; there are words that cut deeper than the sharpest sword. The Norns have ordered, and we must submit."

Then she found Sigurd wearing his hauberk of gold, and his Helmet of Dread, with his sword lying across his knees. She asked him to go to Brynhild; and he consented.

When he entered the open door of Brynhild's room, she asked why he had deceived her; for she

knew nothing about the cup of forgetfulness that Grimhild had given him. They talked a long time, and he tried to comfort her. At last, he offered to put away Gudrun; but she would not consent to that, and he went out. She sent for Gunnar, and asked him to slay Sigurd before the sun rose again.

III. THE DEATH OF SIGURD

Gunnar tore the peace strings from his sword, and went to Grimhild and Hogni. He threw the sword between them, as they were sitting together.

"For whom are the peace strings rent?" asked Grimhild; and he told her that he must take the life of Sigurd. Hogni reminded him of the oath of brotherhood; but Grimhild asked for Guttorm, who was not included in the oath of brotherhood.

As they spoke, Guttorm entered the room. Grimhild rose and gave him a cup which she had prepared. Guttorm drank, and cried, "Where is the foe?"

His mother gave him the cup again, and he asked for his sword. He drank the third time, and put on the armor that his mother brought.

At dawn, he went to Sigurd's room, but shrank from the glance of Sigurd's eyes; and went back to his brothers with his sword unstained.

He went again, and again the bright eyes of Sigurd drove him back. Then footsteps were heard in the hall, and Brynhild stood among them. The third time Guttorm went to the bed of Sigurd, and this time thrust him through with the sword. Then he turned to go away, but fell dead in the doorway, pierced by the Wrath of Sigurd, which the dying Volsung had hurled at him.

Gudrun cried out in grief and terror, "Awake, O House of the Niblungs, for slain is Sigurd the King!"

IV. GUDRUN'S MOURNING

The people wept for Sigurd, but Gudrun shed no tears. The women wailed, but Gudrun did not sigh. The earls came to her, and ancient men, great warriors, and sweet singers came to comfort her.

But no tears and no lamenting in Gudrun's heart would strive,
With the deadly chill of sorrow, that none may bear and live.

The daughters of kings and earls told her of their sorrows. Her father's sister said that her king was slain beside her, and then death claimed her sister, all her brothers, and both her children; and yet she was living a useful and contented life.

Queen Horberg said that her husband and seven

sons fell in one war; her father, mother, and four brothers were lost at sea; and she herself was captured by pirates, and made to serve a robber king.

Then a Niblung maid, named Gullrond, drew away the linen from Sigurd's face, which she turned toward Gudrun. When Gudrun saw it, she bowed her head upon it and wept. Then, with a bitter cry, she left the high seat and fled from the house.

V. THE DEATH OF BRYNHILD

Brynhild stood by a pillar and gazed long at the wounds of Sigurd. Then she went to her room and lay upon her couch. Gunnar came to her, but could speak no word of cheer.

She bade her maidens bring her finest linen, her best robes, and all her jewels. When they were spread before her, she rose and dressed herself in them. "Now," she said, "bring the sword that I carried when I chose the slain."

They brought it, and she laid it unsheathed across her knees, and bade the maidens take whatever they might choose from the store of gold and jewels that her father had given her; but the weeping maidens touched none of her gifts. She stood up, and the point of the sword pierced her heart.

They were laying her on the bed when Gunnar

entered, and she opened her eyes and asked that she might be laid on Sigurd's funeral pyre with the Wrath of Sigurd between them.

The maidens wept, and Gunnar said: —

"Wail on; but, amid your weeping, lay hand to the glorious dead
That not alone, for an hour, may lie Queen Brynhild's head;
For there have been heavy tidings, and the mightiest under shield
Is laid on the bale high builded in the Niblungs' hallowed field.
Fare forth! for he abideth, and we do All-father wrong,
If the shining Valhal's pavement await their feet o'erlong."

They carried Brynhild out to the mound on which Sigurd lay with his shield, his hauberk of gold, and Helmet of Dread, and his sword, the Wrath of Sigurd. An old man ascended the pyre, and held the sword unsheathed until Brynhild's body had been placed on the bed that had been prepared for it. Then he laid the sword between them, and the earls applied the torches.

They are gone: the lovely, the mighty, the hope of the ancient earth!
It shall labor and bear the burden, as before the day of their birth;
It shall groan, in its blind abiding, for the day that Sigurd hath sped,
And the hour that Brynhild hath hastened, and the dawn that waketh the dead;
It shall yearn and be ofttimes holpen, and forget their deeds no more,
Till the new sun beams on Balder, and the happy sealess shore.

THE END OF THE TREASURE

When Gudrun fled from the Niblung palace, she went into the forest, where the wolves howled night and day. She did not fear them, for she did not care to live after Sigurd was gone; but they did not hurt her. She went on, until she came to a pleasant land, where the people were kind and good. It was the land of the Helper; and King Elf gave her a home in his own house, where she lived with Queen Thora, whom King Elf had married, after the death of Hiordis. Gudrun spent the time in teaching the peasant girls to weave and embroider, and herself embroidered many scenes from the life of Sigurd. She never smiled, but was contented; and, as the years passed, became happy in her work.

At the end of seven years, King Atli, Brynhild's brother, sent an earl to the Niblung court, to ask the hand of Gudrun. Atli was old and ugly, but rich and powerful; and Grimhild said that Gudrun must be his wife. "But," she said to her sons, "Gudrun will never listen to you; I must go with

you; and we must take her a present of gold, to atone for the murder of her husband." This they could afford to do, since they had kept the golden treasure which Sigurd had taken from the Glittering Heath.

So the two kings and their mother set out on the journey to the land of the Helper, where they found Gudrun in the house of Queen Thora. They told her why they had come; and she said, "I will not go with you; I will not be King Atli's wife."

But Grimhild coaxed and flattered, and finally told her how much trouble her willful daughter had made. Then Gudrun faltered, and, at last, took the cup her mother offered, and drank the wine. It was the cup of forgetfulness; and she forgot everything, except her love for Sigurd; but she said that, if it would please her mother and brothers, she would become King Atli's queen. Then they rode away together; and, soon after, King Atli claimed his bride.

After a few years, a messenger came from Atli, to say that Gudrun longed to see her brothers. He brought a gold ring, tied with wolf's hair, and engraved with runes. Gudrun had written the runes, to warn her brothers of Atli's treachery; but the messenger had changed some of the letters, to make an invitation, instead of a warning, to the Niblung kings. Hogni suspected that something

was wrong, because the ring was tied with wolf's hair, and said, "By this hair Gudrun means to say, 'Atli is a wolf; beware!'"

Hogni's wife, Kostbera, examined the ring, and found that something had been written over the runes to give them a different meaning. She was greatly alarmed, and told her fears to Glaumvor, Gunnar's wife. That night, they both dreamed of flood, fire, and destruction; and both waked their husbands, to beg them not to go to Atli's court.

Gunnar thought that these fears were groundless, and after drinking wine at a banquet, he promised that both he and his brother would visit King Atli and their sister. Hogni said that, the royal promise having been given, it would be cowardly to break it; and they began to prepare for the journey. But the next morning, before it was light, Hogni called his wife's two brothers and asked them to help him dispose of the golden treasure, because it had already made trouble enough.

They went to the treasure house, brought out the gold, loaded it upon wagons, and drove to the water's edge. Then they unhitched the oxen, and, putting their shoulders to the wheels, shoved the wagons into a deep place in the river.

That day the Niblung kings started on the journey, from which they never returned; for King Atli

put them to death, because they would not tell what had become of the golden treasure, of which nothing now remained except the ring of Andvari, which Gudrun still wore.

After the death of her brothers, Gudrun set fire to Atli's palace while he was sleeping; and, rushing to a cliff, threw herself into the sea. So on her finger, the ring of Andvari, the last piece of gold, went back to the water from which it was taken.

"Ye have heard of Sigurd aforetime, how the foes of God he slew;
How, forth from the darksome desert, the gold of the waters he drew;
How he wakened Love on the mountain, and wakened Brynhild the Bright;
And dwelt upon earth for a season, and shone in all men's sight.
Ye have heard of the Cloudy People, and the dimming of the day,
And the latter world's confusion, and Sigurd gone away;
Now ye know the need of the Niblungs, and the end of broken troth,
All the death of kings and kindred and the sorrow of Odin, the Goth."

NORSE WORDS

Ægir (Ā'-gēr). Giant king of the ocean.

Agnar (Ăg'-när). Brother of Prince Geirrod.

Alsvidir (Äls'-vē-dēr). Horse to the chariot of the moon.

Alsvin (Äls'-vēn) } Horses to the chariot of the sun.
Arvak (Är'-väk) }

Alvis (Äl-vēs'). The dwarf who became stone in the council chamber of the gods.

Andvari (Änd-vä'-rē). The elf from whom the treasure was taken.

Asgard (Äs'-gärd). City of the gods.

Ask (Äsk). Ash from which the first man was made.

Atli (Ăt'-lē). Brynhild's brother.

Andhrimner (Aud-rēm'-nēr). The cook for the heroes in Valhalla.

Audhumbla (Aud-hum'-blä). The cow that nourished Ymir.

Angelmir (Au'-gäl-mēr). Another name for Ymir.

Balder (Bal'-dēr). God of light.

Baugi (Bau'-gē). Brother of Suttung.

Bifrost (Bē'-frōst). The rainbow bridge.

Bil (Bēl). Little girl in the moon. Jill.

Blodughofi (Bloo-dū-ghoo'-fē). Frey's horse.

Boden (Boo'-dān). The cup in which the mead of poetry was kept.

Bolwerk (Bool-värk'). Name assumed by Odin when he worked for Baugi.

Bor (Boor). Father of Odin.

Borghild (Boor'-ghēld). Wife of Sigmund.

Bragi (Brä'-gē). God of poetry and music.

Branstock (Brän'-stǫck). The oak which grew in Volsung's house.

Bredi (Brā-dē'). Thrall, killed by Sigi.

Breidablik (Brā'-dä-blēk). Palace of Balder in Asgard.

Brisingamen (Brē-sĕn'-gä-mān). Freya's necklace.

Brock (Brŏŏck). A brown elf, brother of Sindri.

Brynhild (Brēn'-hĕld). The sleeping Valkyr whom Sigurd waked.

Buri (Bu̥'-rē). Father of Bor. Also land of green groves.
Delling (Dĕl'-ling). Dawn.
Draupnir (Draup'-nēr). The ring given to Odin by the dwarfs.
Eldhrimnir (Ĭld-hrēm'-nēr). The kettle in which food is cooked for the heroes in Valhalla.
Elf (Ĕlv). Son of the Helper, king of Denmark.
Elfheim (Ĕlv'-hām). Fairyland.
Elivagar (Ā-lē'-vä'-gär). The twelve ice rivers of the North.
Elli (Ĕl-lē'). Nurse of Skrymir, or Utgard-Loki: old age.
Embla (Ĕm'-blä). Tree from which the first woman was made.
Eylimi (Ēe-lē'-mē). Father of Hiordis.
Fafnir (Fäf'-nēr). Brother of Regin.
Famine (Făm'-ĭne). Sister of Thrym.
Fenia (Fā'-nē-ä). The captive giantess, whom Frodi bought.
Fenris Wolf (Fĕn'-rēs). One of Loki's sons.
Fialar (Fe'-äl-är). A dwarf who killed Kvasir.
Fimbul Winter (Fēm'-bu̥l). The winter which preceded Ragnarok.
Finsalir (Fēn'-sä-lēr). Palace of Frigga.
Folkvang (Fōlk'-wäng). Palace of Freya.
Frey (Frī). God of sunlight and showers.
Freya (Frī'-yä). Goddess of beauty, sister of Frey.
Frigga (Frēg'-gä). Wife of Odin.
Frodi (Frō'-dē). King of Denmark, son of Frey.
Galar (Ga̤'-lär). A dwarf who killed Kvasir.
Gangrad (Ḡän-gräd'). Name assumed by Odin when he visited Vafthrudnir.
Geirrod (Ḡeir'-rōd). A giant. Also a foster son of Odin.
Gerda (Yăr'-dä). Wife of Frey. Aurora Borealis.
Giallar Bridge (Ḡyäl'-lär). The bridge over the river which formed the boundary of Niflheim.
Giallarhorn (Ḡyäl'-lär-hôrn). Heimdal's trumpet.
Gialp (Ḡēälp). Daughter of Geirrod, mountain torrent.
Gilling (Ḡĭl'-lĭng). The giant who was killed by dwarfs.
Ginnungagap (Ḡĭn-noon'-gä-gäp). The space between the worlds of frost and fire.
Giuki (Ḡē-ü̥'-kē). King of the Cloudy People.
Gnaa (Ḡ-nō). One of Frigga's attendants.
Greyfell (Ḡray'-fell). Sigurd's horse.
Grid (Ḡrēd). A giantess who lent Thor her gloves, belt, and staff.

Grimhild (Grēm′-hĕld). Queen of the Cloudy People.
Grimnir (Grēm′-nēr). Name assumed by Odin when he visited Geirrod.
Griottunagard (Grē-ōt-tū′-nä-gōrd). The place in the land of the giants, where Thor fought the duel with Hrungnir.
Gripir (Grē′-pēr). Keeper of the Helper's stables.
Groa (Grō′-ä). An enchantress, mother of Orvandil. (Green-making.)
Gudrod (Gūd′-rood). Brother of Borghild.
Gudrun (Gūd′-rūn). Daughter of Giuki. Also a Valkyr.
Gullenbursti (Gūl′-lĕn-būrs′-tē). Frey's golden boar, Golden-bristle.
Gullfaxi (Gūll-făx′-ē). Hrungnir's horse.
Gulltop (Gūll-tôp′). Heimdal's horse.
Gungnir (Gūng-nēr′). Odin's spear.
Gunlod (Gūn′-lōd). Daughter of Suttung.
Gunnar (Gūn-när′). Eldest son of Giuki.
Guttorm (Gūt-tôrm′). Third son of Giuki.
Gymir (Gȳ-mēr′). A frost giant, Gerda's father.
Hati (Hạ̈′-tē). A wolf that pursued the moon.
Heidrun (Hā′-drūn). The goat that gave milk for Valhalla.
Heimdal (Hām′-däl). Guard of the rainbow bridge.
Heimir (Hā′-mēr). King of Lymdale.
Hela (Hā′-lä). The goddess of death.
Helgi (Hāl′-gē). Son of Sigmund.
Hermod (Hĕr′-mōd). A son of Odin.
Hindfell (Hĭnd′-fĕll). The mountain on which Brynhild slept.
Hiordis (Hē-ôr′-dēs). Second wife of Sigmund, and mother of Sigurd.
Hjuki and Bil (Hyū′-kē). Children in the moon. Jack and Jill.
Hlidskialf (Hlēd′-skē-älf). Odin's high seat.
Hoder (Hō′-dĕr). The god of darkness, and twin brother of Balder.
Hœnir (Hōō′-nēr). Brother of Odin.
Hogni (Hōg′-nē). Second son of Giuki.
Hræsvelger (Hrā′-svĕl-gĕr). The great eagle of the North.
Hrimfaxi (Hrĕm′-făx-ē). Horse of Night.
Hringhorn (Rĭng′-hôrn). Ship of Balder.
Hrungnir (Hrūng′-nēr). A giant whom Thor killed in single combat.
Hugin (Hū′-gĕn). Servant of Skrymir, Thought. Also, one of Odin's ravens, Mind.
Hunding (Hūnd′-ĭng). An enemy of Sigmund.
Hvergelmir (Var′-gāl-mēr′). The source of the twelve ice rivers.
Hymir (Hȳ-mēr′). The giant from whom Thor obtained a kettle.

Hyrrokin (Hĕr′-rŏk-ĕn). The giantess who launched Hringhorn.
Ida, Plain of (E′-dä). A place of assembly for the gods.
Iduna (Ē-dū′-nä). Goddess of spring and youth, wife of Bragi.
Ifing (Ē-fing′). The river between the land of the giants and Asgard.
Iormungandr (Yoor′-mūn-gän′-dr). The Midgard serpent.
Ivald (Ē-vald). A dwarf, the father of the smiths.
Jotunheim (Yō′-tūn-hām). Land of the giants.
Kostbera (Kōst-bā′-rä). Wife of Hogni.
Kvasir (Kwä-sēr′). A wise being created to celebrate the settlement of the dispute between asas and vanas.
Loder (Lō′-dār). Another name for Loki.
Logi (Lō′-gē). Skrymir's cook, Wildfire.
Loki (Lō′-kē). God of domestic fire and summer heat.
Lygni (Lēg′-nē). A suitor of Hiordis.
Lymdale (Lȳm′-dāle). The home of Brynhild.
Maanagarm (Mō′-nä-gärm). The wolf that would destroy the moon.
Maani (Mō′-nē). The moon. Also the driver of the chariot of the moon.
Maelstrom (Māel′-ström). A whirlpool off the coast of Norway.
Magni (Mäg′-nē). Son of Thor, Strength.
Menia (Mā′-nē-a). The captive giantess, whom Frodi bought.
Midgard (Mēd′-gard). The home of men.
Mimir (Mē′-mēr). The wise giant who kept the well of wisdom.
Mimir's Well. The well of wisdom.
Mjolnir (M-yōl′-nēr). Thor's hammer.
Modi (Mō′-dē). Son of Thor, Courage.
Mundelfari (Mūn′-dĕl-fä′-rē). Father of Sol and Maani.
Munin (Mū′-nĕn). One of Odin's ravens, Memory.
Muspelheim (Mus′-pĕl-hām). The world of fire.
Nanna (Nän′-nä). Balder's wife.
Niblungs (Nēb′-lūngs). The Cloudy People.
Niflheim (Nēfl′-hām). Land of cold and mist.
Njord (Nyōōrd). Father of Frey and Freya.
Noatun (Nō′-ät-ūn). The place of ships. The home of Njord.
Norns (Nôrns). Three sisters who decide the destiny of men.
Nott (Nōtt). Night.
Norvi (Nōr′-vē). Father of Night.
Odhœrir (Ōd′-hōō-rēr). The kettle in which the mead of poetry was kept (inspiration).

Odin (Ō′-dĭn). Father of the gods.
Odur (Ō′-dūr). God of the summer sun, husband of Freya.
Olaf (Ō′-läf). King of Sweden.
Orvandil (Ōr′-vän-dēl). Son of Groa whom Thor rescued from frost giants, Germ.
Peace-Frodi. King of Denmark, Freya's son.
Plain of Ida. A place of assembly in Asgard.
Ragnarok (Räg-nä-rōk′). The last day. Twilight of the Gods.
Ran (Rän). Wife of Ægir.
Ratatosk (Rät-ä-tōsk′). Squirrel in Yggdrasil.
Regin (Rā′-ġēn). The dwarf who taught Sigurd.
Reidmar (Rād′-mär). Father of Regin and Fafnir.
Ririr (Rē′-rēr). Son of Sigi.
Roskva (Rōsk′-vä). Servant of Thor, Industry.
Roti (Rō′-tē). Auger of Odin.
Sæhrimnir (Sā-rēm′-nēr). The boar that furnished meat for the heroes in Valhalla. Frost of the sea.
Sif (Sēf). Goddess of growing grains. Thor's wife.
Siggeir (Sĕg′-gēr). King of the Goths.
Sigi (Sē′-gē). Son of Odin.
Sigmund (Sēg′-mūnd). Son of Volsung, and twin brother of Signy.
Signy (Sēg′-nē). Daughter of Volsung.
Sigurd (Sē′-gūrd). Son of Sigmund.
Sigyn (Siej′-in). Wife of Loki.
Sindri (Sĕn′-drē). A brown elf.
Sinfiotli (Sin′-fē-ōt-lē). Son of Signy.
Skadi (Skä′-dē). Daughter of Thiassi, wife of Njord.
Skidbladnir (Skēd-bläd′-nēr). Frey's ship. A cloud.
Skinfaxi (Skin-fäx-ē). Horse of Day.
Skirnir (Skēr′-nēr). Servant of Frey.
Skol (Skōl). The wolf that pursues the sun.
Skrymir (Skrē-mēr′). The giant who directed Thor to Utgard.
Skrymsli (Skrĭms′-lē). A giant who won the child of a peasant.
Skuld (Skūld). One of the Norns, Future.
Sleipnir (Slāp′-nēr). Odin's eight-footed horse.
Sol (Sōl). The sun. Also daughter of Mundilfari, who drives the chariot of the sun.
Son (Sōn). The bowl in which the mead of poetry was kept (expiation).

Surt (Sūrt). The king of Muspelheim, the fire king.
Suttung (Sūt-tūng). Brother of Gilling, and father of Gunlod.
Svadilfari (Svä-dēl-fä'-rē). Horse of the mountain giant, who built the fortress of Asgard.
Thialfi (Tē-äl'-fē). Servant of Thor, Agility.
Thiassi (Tē-äs'-sē). The storm giant who carried away Iduna.
Thor (Thôr, or Tōr). God of thunder.
Thora (Tō'-rä). Second wife of King Elf.
Throk (Trōōk). The giantess who refused to weep for Balder; coal which can weep only dry tears; or, some say, Loki in disguise.
Thrud (Trūd). Thor's daughter.
Thrym (Trēm). The king of the frost giants.
Thrymheim (Trēm'-hām). Home of the frost giants.
Twilight of the Gods. End of the world, Ragnarok.
Tyr (Tir). God of war.
Urd (Oŏrd). One of the Norns, Past.
Urdar Fountain (Oŏrd'-är). The dwelling place of the Norns.
Utgard (Oŏt'-gärd). The home of Skrymir in Utgard-Loki.
Vadfin (Väd'-fēn). Father of Hjuki and Bil (Jack and Jill).
Vafthrudnir (Väf-thrūd'-nēr). The wise giant.
Vala (Vä'-lä). A prophetess.
Valhalla (Väl-häl'-lä). Hall of the slain. Odin's hall.
Valkyries (Väl'-kȳr-ies). Choosers of the slain. Odin's messengers.
Veli (Vā'-lē). Odin's brother.
Verdandi (Vār-dän'-dē). One of the Norns, Present.
Vi (Vē). Odin's brother.
Vigrid (Vē'-grēd). Plain on which the gods fought their last battle.
Vimur (Vē'-mūr). A river in the land of the giants.
Volsung (Vōl'-sūng). Son of Ririr.
Yggdrasil (Ig'-drä-sēl). Ash tree which supports the world.
Yuletide. Christmas.
Ymir (Eē'-mĕr). The first giant.

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